

Dance Index



Marius Petipa



Балетная труппа.

Первый балетмейстеръ

Петипа, Мариусъ Ивановичъ (съ 24 мая 1847 г.).

Вторые балетмейстеры.

1. Ивановъ, Левъ Ивановичъ (съ 18 февраля 1850 г.).

2. Чекетти, Генрихъ Петровичъ (съ 1 ноября 1887 г.).

Режиссеръ.

Лангаммеръ, Владимиръ Ивановичъ (съ 11 ноября 1866 г.).

The **corps de ballet** of the Maryinsky Theatre on their way to the stage. (From the Annuals of the Imperial Russian Theatres, 1895-1896, listing the Ballet Personnel of the theatre. First ballet-master; Petipa; Second ballet-masters: 1, Lev Ivanov; 2, Enrico Cecchetti)

Dance Index

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Comment

There is little written about the history and science of choreography in the extensive theatrical history of the dance. Every other department has received more attention; even stage architecture and ballet decor are more carefully chronicled than what was actually danced. We know how dancers looked, we can read gossip of how they behaved, but even if old ballets are still in our repertory, they exist in versions that bear less resemblance to the original production than do the costumes or scenery, models for which are preserved either in prints or in actual painting. Hence, the present issue of *Dance Index*, dedicated to the father of the contemporary classic ballet is of particular importance, for it details the life and works of a choreographer. We are indebted to Mr. Anatole Chujoy, the perspicacious editor of *Dance News* for the translation from the original Russian of the Soviet dance-historian Yuri Slonimsky. The version here printed originally appeared in *Lenin-grad* in 1937. In December 1945, we published Mr. Chujoy's translation of Slonimsky's essay on Jules Perrot, and in the future we hope to offer studies of Lev Ivanov and Saint-Léon. Those interested in Marius Petipa's earlier career, before he forsook Western Europe for Russia, will recall Lillian Moore's article in May, 1942 on "The Petipa Family in Europe and America" (*Dance Index*, Vol. I, No. 5). Slonimsky does not mention any of this material.

It is not easy to render Slonimsky into English; not only does he write in an unfamiliar language, but also he uses a vocabulary of academic Marxist apologetics, for which we have no exact equivalents. For example, the word "épigone," used by Lenin to characterize the dilute and enfeebled successors of the original initiators of the Revolution means little even to an informed Western reader. Slonimsky is ruthlessly conscientious; he

has searched in files from which nothing seems ever to have been lost. It has been necessary, even in this double issue, to cut a considerable amount of detailed material.

To those who know of Petipa only as a name on the program of three works in the standard repertory, (with one of them he had but slight connection, and the others have been cut and revised past recognition), the present study will be a revelation. In our ignorance Petipa stands for "classicism," or symmetrical composition. Actually he was in the forefront of the romantic 19th century discovery of folk tales and literary inventions based on archeology. A court servant, the numerous wars and alliances affecting the Tsar offered him repeated pretexts for creating spectacles. Although he spent a long life in the ballet, his position was gained by persistence rather than by any overwhelming success. His genius was not for innovation, except in construction, but rather for a skilful professionalism. He thought of the ballet as a job to be done, a spectacle to be arranged for a given time, a performance to take place employing given elements. He had a remarkable and complicated instrument with which to work, but the security of the Imperial purse was offset by the captiousness of critics and the insecurity of court intrigue. Actually, he had a hard time. But he was interested in *performance* rather than in any philosophy of the dance or innovation in gesture. He was a theatrical craftsman whose material was the dancer; everything else was subordinated, and that is why his name, however faintly associated, is still the symbol for absolute dancing, for those *variations*, those skilful display numbers, which are rewarded, season after season with the greatest applause of the evening.

L.K.

Cover: Marius Petipa, framed in the cover design by K. Somoff for a program of the Hermitage Theatre, 1902.

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Marius Petipa

by Yury Slonimsky

translated by Anatole Chujoy*

A dignified old man, his proud chest covered with medals; soloist of His Imperial Majesty; shrewd courtier; dictator of the Russian ballet—this is the Marius Petipa we know from his portraits and photographs.

“Gifted creator of the Classic Ballet,” “talented librettist,” “fine dramatic actor,” “heir to the traditions of Noverre, Blasis, Dauberval, Vigano, Didelot, Perrot, Saint-Léon,” “custodian of the great legacy of the classic dance,” “founder of the school of the Russian ballet”—this is what we read about Petipa. It is difficult to recognize another personality in this gigantic figure which dominated the entire ballet theatre throughout the last half of the 19th century.

On a hot summer day of 1847 a young Frenchman of about 25 arrived in St. Petersburg, capital of semi-mythical, peasant Russia. Marius Petipa, an unemployed dancer, had been engaged for one season to substitute for his brother, who was lucky enough to get a job in Paris. A timid novice in choreography, he stood that day in front of the director of the Imperial Theatres and was deeply moved by his reception: Gedeonoff had presented him with three months of paid idleness. He had never known such generosity.

Only a short while ago, in his native land, he was facing a sad prospect. What was in store for him? A wandering life till old age; accidental favors from the almost extinct tribe of Maecenas; half-starving perambu-

lations through provincial towns, sharing the scanty proceeds with his brothers-in-trade; the dim, distantly looming possibility of dancing some day in a performance with a celebrity; and after this, again endless wanderings, third-rate hotels and the rotation of dull workdays.

Born into a family of itinerant ballet dancers (of which there were many roaming through Europe after the ruin of feudal France), he came into the world “on the road,” while his parents were touring, and at the age of nine appeared in a comic ballet by his father. He spent his youth in Nantes, where his success as ballet master was most doubtful. Once he appealed in vain to an impresario after he had broken his leg on the stage and was destitute. So precarious was his existence that he considered even the cheap success of his Spanish guest appearances of great importance. This is the portrait of another Petipa, at the beginning of his career as a dancer in St. Petersburg.

The first decade of the 20th century will, perhaps, deny him, will call his works “the old ballet,” will, with unforgivable levity, confuse the valuable with that which is devoid of value and, “having made obeisance to the past,” will forget about him.¹

Yet, from the dust of archives, through myths and legends surrounding his name emerges, distinct and clear, the figure of Marius Petipa—the great Mohican of the classic dance in the past century.

* The parenthetical notes scattered through the text are initialed to denote their authorship: Y.S.—Yury Slonimsky, and A.C.—Anatole Chujoy.

The first steps of the young Petipa in St. Petersburg² were extraordinarily successful, the season of 1847-48 entering on his credit side two new ballets: "Paquita" in September, 1847 and "Satanella" in February 1848. Let us not search these works for manifestations of future genius: his early attempts conscientiously reproduced the Paris productions of Mazilier, "after whom," as the posters say, Petipa was showing them to St. Petersburg.

In 1848, Jules Perrot's arrival in Russia temporarily obscured the success of Petipa's first choreographic efforts, forcing him back into the ranks where Perrot entrusted him with the principal roles in his ballets.

During the next few years he produced several small ballets and divertissements ("The Swiss Milkmaid," "The Star of Grenada" and others) for his wife, Maria Sourovschikova-Petipa, testing his own power, but not exciting any special attention. In 1855, realizing that his career as a dancer could not last much longer, he accepted a position as instructor in the ballet school.

In 1859 he produced a one-act ballet "The Parisian Market," a gay genre spectacle which, in a season of fantastic and dramatic ballets, was enthusiastically received.

During the "inter-regnum" of 1860 (Perrot had left and Saint-Léon had not yet taken things in hand), he produced "The Blue Dahlia," but the production was unsuccessful.³

Thirteen years of his stay in Russia had already passed, but Petipa's position was still uncertain, and his prospects far from brilliant. Letters from his brother in Paris offered no encouragement. The interest in ballet was flagging, there was confusion, unemployment, and little hope of obtaining a good position there. Not without reason did the celebrated Saint-Léon hold on so firmly to St. Petersburg, and famous European ballerinas clamor to come to Russia.

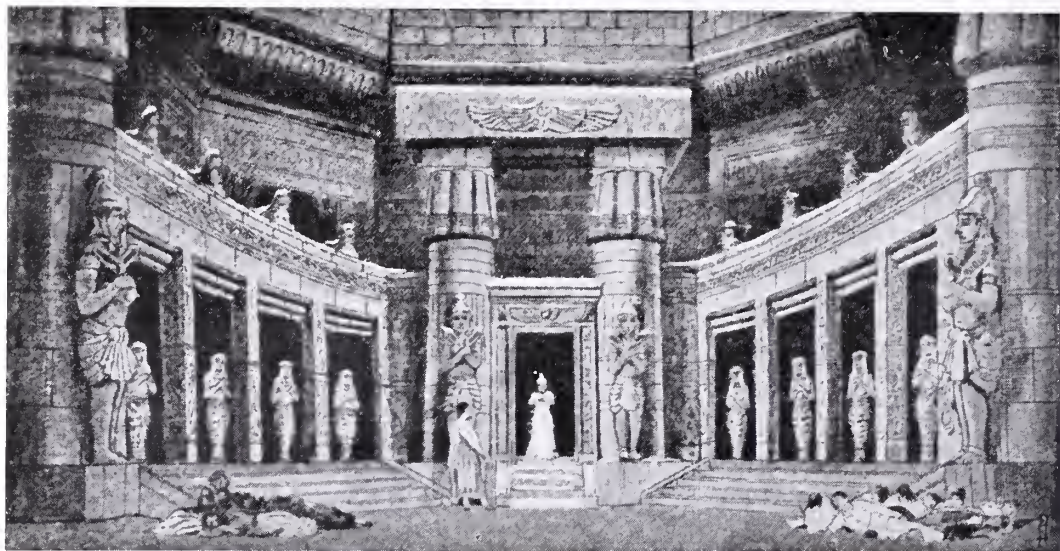
The Petipa archives clearly show his determination to succeed as a choreographer.

From Paris his brother sent him all the libretti he could get, and Petipa studied them very carefully. He struck up an acquaintance with the famous French librettist Saint-Georges, author of the book of "Giselle," and the libretti of numerous operas, and avidly set himself to absorb the great and complicated science of Saint-Léon.

Historians, following Petipa's own memoirs, relate that an incident in 1862 helped him come to the fore. The guest ballerina (Carolina) Rosati was without a ballet for her benefit-night. Saint-Léon had left, and the direction maintained that it would be impossible to produce a new ballet in six weeks. At that moment Petipa appeared, "unexpectedly," and offered his services. In six weeks he produced the five-act ballet "The Daughter of Pharaoh," and the overcrowded auditorium

Marius Petipa in *The Daughter of Pharaoh*





Setting for *The Daughter of Pharaoh*. Prologue, Tableau II, Inside the Pyramid

of the Bolshoi Theatre rewarded him with a thunder of applause, bringing him fame which spread over the entire European continent.

This story, which quotes Petipa's own words, is not entirely true. Actually, Petipa prepared for the production, not six weeks, but almost two years. Not only did he put all his creative power into this work, but, in desperation, all his resources as well.

And the stake was won.

Now, when this ballet lies dormant among others in the music archives, forgotten even by the few remaining eye witnesses, it is especially interesting and important to ascertain wherein lay the power of its influence. There is no doubt that its success depended first of all on the timeliness of the selected theme. The entire civilized world was following with breathless interest the Egyptian excavations which almost daily brought to light some new feature of a great culture, long extinct. To those who scanned the yellow press for piquant details of these excavations, for accounts of romantic events and

mysterious phenomena, "The Daughter of Pharaoh," which supposedly approached historical plausibility, was an interesting novelty.

The librettist Saint-Georges had an excellent "nose for the apropos." From a short story by Théophile Gautier, "Roman D'Une Momie," (for almost a whole century choreographers repeatedly used themes of Gautier!) he developed "The Daughter of Pharaoh" as cleverly as he had been cutting out opera libretti by the dozen every year. But Petipa approached his scenario critically, changed it and adapted it to his own conception.

The monumental proportion of this work is the first characteristic to catch the eye. Bolshoi Theatre audiences, tired of Perrot's melodramas and Saint-Léon's kaleidoscopic changes of dance and action scenes, applauded its very monumentality.

On "The Daughter of Pharaoh" Petipa lavished his full store of knowledge and experience: everything he had seen and learned from his teachers in Nantes, Bordeaux, and during his work side by side with Saint-Léon

and Perrot. Undeterred by the heterogeneous effect in form and content, he reproduced melodramatic traditions (the scenes of Pharaoh's daughter and the Nubian king), Saint-Léon's quasi-folk humor (the scenes and dances in the fisherman's hut), and the false pathos of dying romanticism (the scenes of the storm), all within a single frame. This spectacle, together with a procession of dancers not justified by the subject matter but fitting into the choreographic scale, was animated by a modified can-can of the *corps de ballet*, and pretensions of "Egyptology" in a few costumes and poses introduced according to Petipa's own sketches.

There is not a single new idea in this first of Marius Petipa's large-scale works. All of it is permeated by a disciple-like devotion to his master-predecessors.

In his skill in building the mass dance on a big scale, Petipa surpassed his teacher Sain-Léon, the "temporizer" of the St. Petersburg ballet. Petipa's *corps de ballet* in "The Daughter of Pharaoh" (the scene of the hunt for example) had acquired the sweep of the big stage, an almost music-hall brilliance, enlivened by a dashing rhythm and effective tempi.

Akim Volynsky is right when he speaks about the accumulation of material in Petipa's ballets and asserts that "the big dramatic duet, the *pas d'action* in 'The Pharaoh's Daughter' is a real choreographic mass. There are so many people here, necessary and unnecessary! The daughter of the Pharaoh, her friend, the Englishman, two confidantes, a kind of dancing partner, Pharaoh's own brother. For each of these persons, except the Englishman, there are separate dances staged with all the skill of which Marius Petipa was capable. These persons dance solo as well as in passing ensembles."⁴

Saint-Léon could not have done this, and it would have been beyond the ability of Perrot, to whom Petipa's piling up would have seemed a hypertrophy of action dance. But the audience, the press, the artists and

the direction of the Imperial Theatres were excited by the eclectic mixture in this "mass" of tinted, dying romanticism, the splendor of tedious choreographic baroque (the act "On the Bottom of the Nile") and the deliberate simplicity of pseudo-classicism.

Petipa decided to extract from his victory everything possible. With scissors and pen in his hands, he scrutinized the press notices of "The Daughter of Pharaoh," touched up what, in his opinion, was not good enough, discarded the superfluous, changed the name Rosati to the name of his wife (she also needed publicity) and sent the articles to his brother in Paris "for publication in the local press",⁵ attempting in this manner to influence, via Paris, his St. Petersburg authorities. When the laudatory reviews of Petipa's production appeared in the French press, he decided to confront the direction with an ultimatum. Did it consider his creative work, which had received a high evaluation here and in Europe, his direct, official duty or just a courtesy?

The direction of the Imperial Theatres surrendered. It reached an understanding about salary, and appointed Marius Petipa second ballet-master. And two years later the ballet-master-in-chief and proud teacher, Saint-Léon, borrowed from his shrewd pupil the only unique feature of "The Daughter of Pharaoh"—the dimensions of the "mass," and developed the second grandiose canvas of the Russian ballet theatre, "The Hump-backed Horse."

In 1863-64 Petipa staged "The Beauty of Libanus," but in spite of good decor by Charlemagne it was a scandalous failure. Petipa was even accused of plagiarism. From the point of view of choreographic art "The Beauty of Libanus" turned out to be a very mediocre and insignificant work. We don't know of any ballet which contained such endless borrowing from other choreographers. . . . All groups were either unsuccessful or reminiscent of groups already seen on the stage. A good number of the dances



Maria Petipa in *The Little Moujik*

were also borrowed: "The Dance of the Birds," for instance, was borrowed from "The Pearl of Seville," others remind one of "The Spirit of the Dale."⁶ The most stupid and absurd libretto contributed to the failure of the production.

Petipa was devastated, and applied himself anew to discovering the secret of Saint-Léon's success in masking the emptiness of a production with showy, spectacular scenes, and fortifying it by exploiting the talents of the principal dancers, thereby concealing the poverty of ideas in the show. He studied the master's improvisation, his skill in the transformation of familiar methods, and his clever recoloring of material borrowed from the works of others. Petipa aspired to become a

second Saint-Léon—a gifted prestidigitator, capable of executing any order.

The very next year, 1865, he "passed his first examination." Sensing the current popularity of nationalist-patriotic plays, he staged a new number, "The Little Moujik," in which his wife, Maria Petipa appeared in a concert.

It was a mere trifle, yet this miniature obscured the success of the Russian dances in "The Humpbacked Horse."

"The audience was especially electrified by Mme. Petipa in 'The Little Moujik,' dressed in a Russian national costume, in wide velveteen trousers, a red blouse, turned-down top-boots, coachman's cap decorated with a peacock feather and worn aslant. 'The Little Moujik' was infinitely cute and threw the stalls into a kind of frenzied state; one could go deaf from the shouts of "bravo" . . . the dance could not have been staged more successfully."⁷

(The impression of such a number is undoubtedly the basis of the biting retort of Nekrassoff (a Russian poet, A.C.), who considered this another mockery of the folk ideas.)⁸

But for the stalls, which "were thrown into a kind of frenzied state" and where the newly united heads of the bourgeoisie and nobility "paid tribute to the national feeling," everything in Petipa's number was "cute" and essential. Blinded by liberal amiability, the reviewer adds: "Evidently the choreographer who composed it (Petipa) has thoroughly studied all shades of the Russian, not theatrical but real, folk dance and knows the Russian moujik not from French illustrations."⁹ We are reproducing here a photograph of Maria Petipa as objective evidence of the nature of this dance and the resemblance of the dancer to a "real moujik."

The next year Petipa staged another big ballet "Florida," but it too was a failure, as the pattern of motley divertissements, strung on a thread of the simplest intrigue in the Saint-Léon manner, was beginning to bore

the public. Over-encouraged by the success of "The Little Moujik" and other divertissement numbers, Petipa failed to notice the audience's change of taste. Wicked tongues expressed doubt in his talent, and the direction of the Imperial Theatres, despite its artistic indiscrimination, considered suspending his choreographic work, and planned to transfer him to Moscow, where failures and troublesome people were always sent. Instead of protesting, Petipa instantly demanded a considerable increase in salary, which caused such discord within the direction that he was finally allowed to remain in St. Petersburg.¹⁰ He again retired into the shade for a breathing spell, which he devoted to the revival of tested ballets by other choreographers, chiefly Perrot ("Faust," 1867; "Corsaire," 1868). Through this modest activity he gained great experience in revision, and opened up the rich reserves of long forgotten choreographic material.

During these years he undoubtedly gained confidence and after serious consideration decided to show his new ballet "King Candaule" (1868).

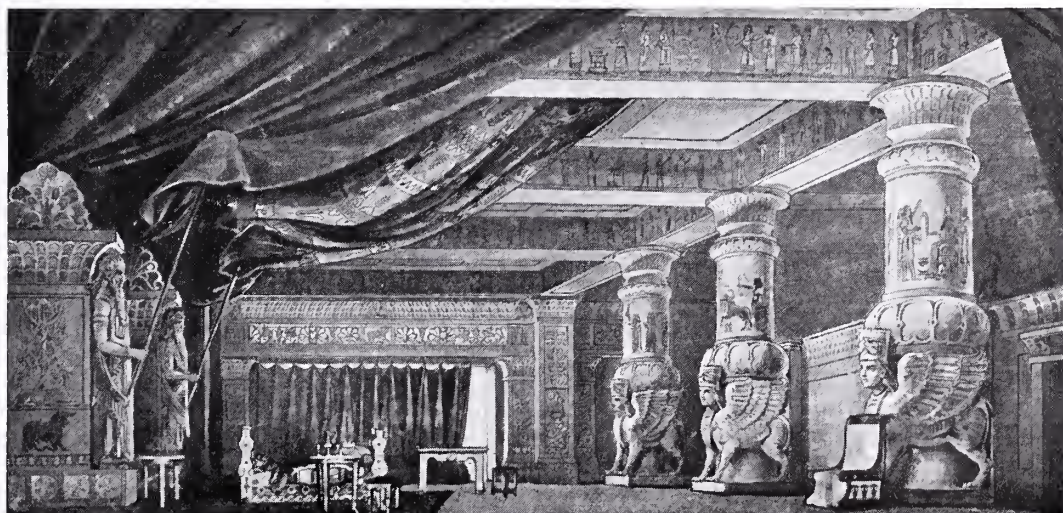
Again a collaboration with Saint-Georges,

long and careful preparations, and again a slight bow to the creditable melodramas of Perrot, and to the best of them—"Giselle" (the mad scene). Again the wide sweep in the dancing of the *corps de ballet*, a suggestion of archaism, and again the "monumental mass."

The dimensions, scale and variety were such that every spectator must surely find something in it to admire. Once more Petipa was crowned with glory.

It is true that the construction he built was cracking and swaying suspiciously even at that time. The compositional defects of "The Daughter of Pharaoh" showed in greater relief in this second victory of Petipa. Saint-George's libretto was composed too flippantly, episodes from Herodotus being intermixed with a free rendition of Théophile Gautier's work, the novel "Le Roi Candaule," and the librettist's own inventions. The booming, rhythmically "dependable" music of Cesare Pugni, who had definitely lost his creative individuality, did not stand up to Petipa's tendency toward monumentality; it sounded empty and lacked the former qualities of this composer (compared, for instance, with

Setting for **King Candaule**, Act IV, The Royal Bedchamber



the music of "Esmeralda" or "Katarina").

From Perrot Petipa learned the methods of production and composition of dramatic scenes, but he realized his knowledge on a dramaturgically incorrect basis, and drowned these episodes in a sea of dance numbers, alien to the libretto. A multitude of mass dances with suggestions of pseudo-antiquity in costumes and props passed before the spectator, including a can-can dancing Amazon, and a heroine dancing in her insanity. To these must be added a long, varied diversissement: the dance of the Three Graces, which advantageously set off the gifts of the performers; the hunt of Diana, a composition which retains its choreographic value even in our days; the dance of Venus and her attendants, and the dance of the savages.

After a visit to Paris, Petipa decided to add some spectacular effects to "The Daughter of Pharaoh." These additions enjoyed a deserved success. In the heroine's bathing scene shouts of bravo for the decorator and ballet-master continued for a long time. "A high waterfall, occupying the entire width of the stage, cascaded over a huge sheet of glass into a mirrored pool, lighted from the top and sides by electric batteries. Behind the glass danced the female artists of the ballet, and the spectator had the impression that they were moving in the water."¹¹ At the head of this gigantic monument stood the visiting ballerina, Henriette D'Or, in a gilded cuirasse. "She stepped on toe, slowly did *petits battements* and then, without getting off toe, did five turns on the spot, without moving her body."¹²

Small wonder, after this, that the ballet withstood twenty-two successive performances, and was staged in Moscow by Petipa, sent there for the purpose.

The success of this revival came at an opportune time, not only for the ballet-master. The ministry of the court had been contemplating a decision to discontinue the importation of foreign ballets. This was dictated both by considerations of economy (the

theatres were operating with a huge deficit) and by the comparison (advantageous for Russia) of its "own" flourishing ballet with the obvious decline of choreography in Western Europe. There were also, unquestionably, elements of nationalistic court pride, as we know from the surprised Saint-Léon, who complained: "I asked them to print on the poster 'Adele Grantzova, first dancer of the Bolshoi Theatre and the Paris Opéra,' but the Grand Duke Constantine remarked: 'Paris does not concern us.'"¹³

When Saint-Léon left in 1869, Petipa became in effect the only ballet-master of the Imperial Theatres in St. Petersburg and even Moscow.

* * *

The sun of real fame appeared to be rising on Petipa's horizon, and a wide sphere of action opened before him, after twenty-two years of work during which he had almost more failures than successes. Two theatres (the Bolshoi and the Maryinsky), a company, a school and several smaller court theatres (the Hermitage, Peterhoff, Czarskoie Selo, Krasnoie Selo, Kammenyi Ostorov) were entirely in his hands.

One could scarcely say that the direction of the Imperial Theatres had become more generous or more considerate toward Petipa as a result of Saint-Léon's departure, since it refused him a raise in salary (he received a little as the *régisseur* whose duty it was to watch the dancers' cues), and cancelled his summer leave.¹⁴ But these were comparative trifles so far as he was concerned. For the most important thing, power, the authority of a dictator, was in his hands.

In compliance with the demands of the direction, "a new ballet for the beginning of every season," Petipa rolled up his sleeves, set to work and produced new works in batches. In ten years he staged fourteen big ballets in addition to revivals and dances in operas.

During the first half of 1876 Petipa created three new ballets: "The Adventures of

Peleus" in three acts and five scenes; the four-act ballet "Bayadère"; and the one-act "Midsummer Night's Dream." In 1879 he produced a ballet in five acts, "The Daughter of the Snows," a one-act ballet, "Frizak, the Barber," and "Mlada," consisting of nine scenes.

Great will power, endless fantasy, and a vast deal of energy and patience with long and serious preparations were necessary to realize such a huge plan, and this was the period of Petipa's most intensive work. He devoted himself to it with the ardor and zeal of a man who has been waiting very long for the fulfilment of his dreams.

And what was the result? The chart of his career shows a broken curve, with deep falls and rare ascents. How can one explain this strange phenomenon?

Let us look back at the past decade.

"Ballet was then very fashionable. It was here that the millionaires and owners of the greatest fortunes foregathered. Very young officers encountered generals, foppish civilians met gray-haired diplomats."¹⁵ "In the lobbies of the theatre the nobility consolidated its tie with the bourgeoisie through close intercourse. At that time all the money paid by the government to the nobility for the freed serfs (the serfs in Russia were freed in 1861, A.C.) had not yet been spent, the railroad building boom was at its full height, the bacchanale of (railroad building, A.C.) concessions attracted to St. Petersburg crowds of people with a lust for quick profits. Hand in hand with these profits went equally fast spending."¹⁶

But ten years passed, patriotic speeches came to an end, the bourgeoisie locked itself in its private mansions and became socially and politically indifferent. "The Golden Years" of the theatre disappeared into the past.

In the 60's "Three days a week were assigned to ballet performances," but now "the theatre began to remain empty to such an extent that free seats were given out by the

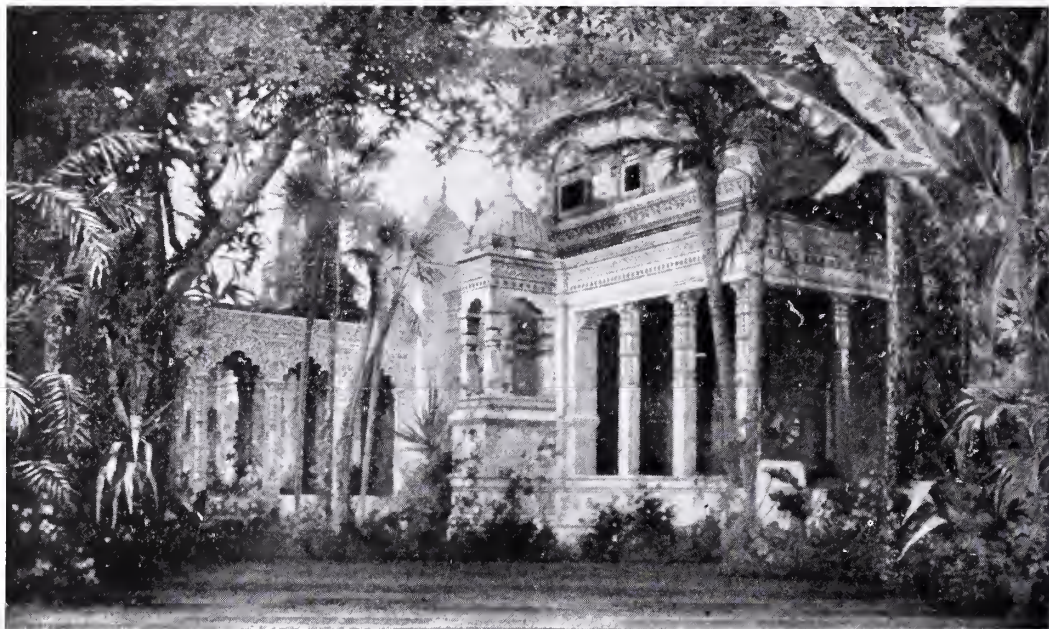


Luigi Albertieri (right), at the age of eleven, in *The Bandits*. (Courtesy of Mrs. Abbie Albertieri)

box office in order, somehow, to fill the auditorium."¹⁷

"During the past season ballets were given once a week. The prices were raised several times. Cheap seats were raised by 50 per cent but the price for expensive seats was not raised that much. . . . Ballet performances were given less and less often. . . ." sorrowfully notes the Theatrical Almanac for the year 1875.¹⁸ "Yes, the time of the flourishing of the ballet has passed forever,"¹⁹ concludes a ballet reviewer with a sigh.

Only one theatre was crowded as before and played to packed houses. Dressed up with the help of a translator, and toothless thanks to the efforts of the censors, the popular "operetta" attracted the multitude



Setting for *La Bayadère*

with its frivolity and flat witticisms, its gay, comical situations and quick interchanges of theatrical expressive means—song, dance and dialogue.

Petipa entered the lists fully armed, before him the question of whether or not he could guide the destinies of the world's only powerful theatrical complex—the Russian ballet.

In "*Don Quixote*" (1869-1871) he hurriedly mobilized his entire reserve of Spanish impressions, and presented an over-intense, but for his time, brilliant series of dance scenes of a Spanish festival,²⁰ interpolating various characters borrowed from Cervantes. Incidentally, they were not successful, either with the public or with the press.²¹

In "*Trilby*" (1870-1871) Petipa hoped to achieve success by utilizing the theme of a popular story of the 30's-40's, by Charles Nodier, and by introducing tricks from a fashionable Parisian fairyland spectacle that played to full houses. From a huge golden cage which filled the entire width of the

stage, brilliant groups of dancers, dressed as various birds, flew onto the scene.²² But such elaborate and mechanical devices failed to intrigue the Russian capitol, in spite of their popularity in Paris.

The ballet "*Camargo*" (1872) with its richness, variety and sweep, was a show of such proportions that even "*The Sleeping Beauty*," produced later, pales in comparison with it. A good libretto by Saint-Georges served as a framework for splendidly designed scenes of 18th century court and pastoral life, and for a staggering profusion of dancing, all of which brightened for an instant the tarnished repertoire of the theatre.

In 1874 Petipa staged "*The Butterfly*," another ballet on a libretto by Saint-Georges which had been given successfully in Paris in the 50's. Again taking his cue from the French popular taste, he included a "*Ballet of the Vegetables*," a "*Ballet of Insects*," and even introduced topical elements, based on scraps of news from his brother in Paris.

Neither these features, nor an unprecedented attitude toward fantasy, in exposing the impotence of the magic wand, succeeded in pleasing his audience.

The same fate befell "The Bandits" (1875), in which the simple but logical libretto, based on the old and often used theme of Cervantes' story, "The Little Gypsy," was diluted by fairy-land *divertissements*.

Two attempts in the following year, 1876, to deal with more classical themes, were only mildly successful, despite the freshness and invention of the dances in "The Adventures of Peleus," and Mendelssohn's music for "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Petipa was becoming disoriented, had ceased to understand the taste of his audience to such an extent that he almost expected failure. Among his papers there is the draft of an appeal to the public: "I did everything that was possible to produce a model composition. If I did not entirely succeed in it, I shall say in my justification that a butterfly with weak wings cannot rise to the height of a genius."²³

As his self-confidence waned, people criticized more than they praised him and Petipa was in despair. The years of leadership in the ballet had not come easily to him and the constant rushing about in search of what would please both the direction and the audience had long since forced him to repudiate his youthful ideals.

In 1874 the Danish ballet master Bournonville, an old man who until his very death proudly tried to retain the appellation "artist-romanticist," came to St. Petersburg; he was horrified by what he saw.

"Much as I wanted to, I could not discover action, dramatic interest, logical continuity, something that would even remotely remind one of common sense. And if, on occasion, I did succeed in finding a trace of something like it (as, for example, in Petipa's 'Don Quixote'), the impression was immediately obscured by an endless number of monotonous bravura appearances."²⁴ "I could

not refrain from these and similar remarks during my conversations with Johannsen and the ballet-master Petipa. They fully agreed with me, assuring me that in their innermost hearts they had an aversion for this direction, despised it, but, shrugging their shoulders, declared that they were forced to swim with the current, and referred to the blasé tastes of the public and the explicit will of the high authorities."²⁵

We trust the testimony of Bournonville. Petipa knew what was happening in Western Europe, and understood the necessity of capitulating to "the *divertissementation*" of ballet, which he had already begun to do in the 70's. However, he was actually worried by something entirely different: "What does the Russian ballet audience want?"

When failure follows failure, it means that the author does not know his audience, has no tie with him, and does not learn from him—thus, in his time, Saint-Léon used to say. Remembering his advice, Petipa struck up a friendship with Sergei Khoudékoff, publisher of the St. Petersburg Gazette, one of the most important bourgeois newspapers in St. Petersburg; on its pages the publisher-balletomane used to offer recipes for the improvement of choreography.

The friendship developed into a collaboration. In 1876 Petipa staged a new ballet, "Bayadère," based on a libretto by Khoudékoff, which enjoyed great and abiding success. For the last time he turned to the romantic ballet in search of imagery and exciting color. Having experimented with newer styles to no effect, he reverted to the source from which he acquired his education and choreographic training and derived therefrom sufficient inspiration to breathe life into parts, at least, of the production of "Bayadère." Unfortunately the major portion of the ballet was a conglomeration of styles, genres and methods of extremely low quality, approximately of the same caliber as in "The Daughter of the Pharaoh" and "King Candaule."

The success of "Bayadère" restored Petipa's shaken self-confidence to some extent.

In 1877 (the year of the Russo-Turkish war for the repartition of the Balkans), with Khoudekoff's help, he staged the ballet "Roxana—the Beauty of Montenegro," which elicited the comment from a contemporary reviewer that "Probably a considerable part of St. Petersburg's high society has learned about Montenegro, its customs and manners, only from the ballet."²⁶ On close inspection Petipa's adaptability proved to be most primitive. The plot involved two rival figures: a Christian Montenegrin and

a Mohammedan Montenegrin, whose conflict resolved in a battle that was won, of course, by the Christian. Around this he introduced militantly patriotic scenes and numerous Montenegrin dances with national names ("Kolo," etc.), along with elements of the romantic genre: big fantastic scenes of the "Wils"—relatives of the Willis in "Giselle."

The most popular feature was undoubtedly Petipa's skilful adaptation of the Montenegrin folk-dances, and so long as public interest in the war persisted, "Roxana" lingered in the repertoire.

When talk about the Balkan situation subsided, a new topic of conversation made its appearance, and "no sooner had Norden-scheld frozen to death on the Northern ice than there appeared a ballet, 'The Daughter of the Snows,' depicting the fantastic adventures of one of the polar expeditions";²⁷ the reviewer continued to register Petipa's novelties.

The excursions into neo-romantic fantasy to which Petipa devoted himself after "Bayadère" were unfortunate. "The Daughter of the Snows" survived but briefly, in spite of an electric aurora borealis, effective mass dances on ice, and a group of lively gypsy dances in the harbor.

In an effort to change his luck, Petipa staged a single production in an utterly unfamiliar vein—"Frizak the Barber," a ballet with songs and comic dances, constructed in the style of the late Saint-Léon. But this speechless comic form could not compete with the heart-conquering operetta, which continued to amuse the stalls with its cheap puns and vulgar dialogue, so "Frizak" was quickly withdrawn, "having given a momentary pleasure."

Puzzled and distressed by his failures, Petipa pondered the recent great success of nationalistic, patriotic plays, and out of his reserves pulled a libretto by Gedeonoff, Jr., "Mlada" (known to us from the opera "Mlada" by Rimsky-Korsakoff). He worked

hard on the preparations, studying Slavonic history, sketching costumes and the poses of buffoons,²⁸ and he composed some good grotesque dances. But all in vain; the ballet had no following.

Another novelty, doomed to failure before it appeared, was brought into being by "monarchical will." "It is being forecast that the revival of the ballet 'La Fille du Danube' will be a failure. . . . The ballet is 'based on pantomime for which there are no performers,'" warned the newspaper "Souffleur" (No. 2, 1879). Recalling the earlier performance with Taglioni, flame of his youth, Alexander II found the revival of 1880 a sad disappointment.

Foreseeing this outcome, Petipa was preparing, simultaneously with "La Fille du Danube," a big heroic-romantic ballet, "Zoraia," with strong dramatic scenes, and a number of Spanish and Moorish dances. It was presented February 1st, 1881 and seemingly had the long-awaited favorable response of the auditorium.

But hardly had the first laudatory reviews appeared and the public begun to buy tickets, when on March 1st, 1881, the historic bomb which killed Alexander II exploded in the Katherine Canal (a street in St. Petersburg, A.C.).

The Imperial Theatres were enveloped in gloom, and despite the energetic measures taken by the new director, choreographic art sank lower and lower, and the repertoire dwindled. From 1881 to 1885 only three new ballets were produced. One was the obvious failure, "Pygmalion," with an amateurish libretto and trashy, dilettante music by Prince Troubetskoy. Another was a revival of Perrot's ballet "The Wilful Wife," with a few dances added. The third, and actually the only new one, was a copy of the Paris production of Delibes' "Coppelia." It took fourteen years and the lack of novelties to bring this ballet to the Imperial stage.

On the whole, Delibes' ballets had no luck on the Russian stage. The best score, "Syl-

via," was not honored with a stage production for 25 years. The disregard for "Coppelia" might be traced to a suspicion of its un-academic character: a ballet comedy was considered low style.

In addition to the aforementioned, Petipa reconstructed "Paquita," for which he composed several masterpieces of the classic dance: the *pas de trois* of Act 1, the excellent variations in the *grand pas* of Act 3, and the remarkable children's mazurka, the finest ballet number for youngsters on the pre-revolutionary stage.

Indeed, the ballet in Russia was in very poor health.

"Our *corps de ballet* is not being freshened up with new faces, and girl-pupils are allowed to push themselves from the school directly into the ranks of soloists."

"The *corps de ballet* dances carelessly, drags its feet, hardly moves its arms, tramples on the stage. . . ."

"Pantomime is the weakest of our dances."

"Our best dancers do not consider it necessary to trouble themselves with daily practice."

Such sentences are scattered through contemporary press reviews, along with ominous notices about the standstill in dance technique, its decay, the artists' disdain for other elements of performing skill. "The artistic side of the contemporary ballet, i.e., grace, plasticity, pantomime, harmony and picturesqueness in groups, is relegated to the background . . . dancers exploit technique, effects; choreographers exploit scenery, fountains, panoramas, trying to invent various difficulties for the dancers. . . ." ²⁹ The observant theatrical critic A. Bajenoff offered a deadly summary of the situation: "The newest ballets are not created, but assembled from poorly thought-out dances. The difference between a ballet and a *divertissement* hardly exists . . . currently they (dancers) completely forget to think about the execution of ballet roles." ³⁰

Conditions were especially bad among the

ballet personnel. "In nearly thirty years the school has not graduated a single *premier danseur*." ³¹ On the stage there were only three of them: Paul Gerdt, Lev Ivanov and Christian Johannsen, who had arrived from abroad. But all these gifted dancers were already middle-aged . . . in addition there wasn't a single good character dancer or comedian among them.

The lack of male dancers was generally acute, not only in the St. Petersburg ballet. In Paris they had long since learned to do without men, having replaced them with girls—*en travestie*. Now they were beginning to talk about it in Russia. The press opened a discussion, and even the most enthusiastic defenders of male dancers supported their point of view half-heartedly; "all those graceful *pas* and *pirouettes* executed by our male dancers are tiresome and monotonous. But to eliminate entirely the participation of men in ballet performances would be inconvenient (?! Y.S.) . . . the man is necessary in ensembles and groups, but his solos should be entirely proscribed." ³²

The poor *danseur*, deprived of opportunities to dance, was finally transformed into "a catapult which launches the ballerina," as his Paris colleagues were christened long ago.

In this artistically poor entourage, the last exponents of the romantic *ballet d'action* grew into gigantic figures—Nicholas Goltz, Alexander Pichot, Timothy Stoukolkin, who had no one to whom to pass on their traditions and skill.

Dancers and choreographers were accompanied in the headlong decline of standards by writers and musicians who did nothing to alleviate the condition. Not a single fresh plot idea penetrated the ballet. Even if one had been proposed, the authorities would most probably have rejected it. "To compel a king, a clergyman, a general, statesman, lawyer, doctor or merchant to dance, is somehow ridiculous and not expedient. Ballets must chiefly charm and amuse the eye." ³³

The ballet-master Auguste Bournonville loudly complained about existing thematic limitations. "The humorous borders on the harlequinade, and is almost intolerable on our classic stage. The tragic must have a happy ending, otherwise the composer will meet with the fate of Euripides, who was banished into exile because he distressed Athenian theatre-goers. I will not be permitted to transform well-known operas and dramas into ballets. Greek myths and Roman antiquities have so often been subjected to defiling parodies that no one will dare to approach them seriously. . . . Thus there remain only children's tales—the world of sorceries and fairies."³⁴

The situation was equally bad regarding ballet music, now in the hands of second rate composers. Half a century had passed since Pugni accepted a contract with the direction of the Imperial Theatres by the terms of which he was obligated to compose not less than two big ballets a year. But this half century changed nothing for the succeeding generation of composers who grew up on the soil prepared by Pugni, and developed a specific style of "special ballet music." "Who listens to the music of ballets nowadays? In most of the newest ballets the purpose of the music is only to furnish the rhythm for the movements of the dancers . . ." thus the author of an article on contemporary ballet music formulated the prevailing attitude.³⁵ Only want can compel a self-respecting musician to write two ballets a year and limit the music to the function of rough meter. If in former times ballet music was nourished by the inspiration and culture of the all-musical stream, the successors of François Herold and Adolphe Adam in Russia wallowed in the mire of their trade. In the magazine "Musical World" (1877), Minkus was criticized because his "music for 'Bayadère' was, regrettably, too serious" (sic!).

Verdi, Massenet, Delibes, Bizet in Europe, Glinka, Dargomyjsky, Tchaikowsky, Balaki-



Marius Petipa, 1847. (Inscribed to the dancer, Stoukolkine)

reff, the young Rimsky-Korsakoff in Russia—all of these moved freely through fields which remained unknown to the poor tradesman of ballet music, frozen in the routine of excessive and theatrically complicated demands.

"Our poor ballet is reduced to a complete decline. The public patronizes it a little, business is bad," deplored an enlightened balletomane of the 80's.

For the first time in his forty-year career Petipa was really worried and frightened. Times had certainly changed. These were not the 40's when a score of ballet theatres was at the service of the famous masters of Western Europe, Saint-Léon, lately deceased idol of the public, was forgotten; old age found Marie Taglioni ending her life in poverty, and Jules Perrot fishing in a faraway provincial village. Petipa's brother Lucien was having a hard time of it in Paris; and recently, Blasis had been dismissed with a scandal from the Moscow ballet, the famous Blasis, who, having twice betrayed his ideals, did not want to, or could not, betray them

a third time.³⁶ Marius Petipa had reason enough to be apprehensive. He could leave the theatre, but he had a big family to consider, and, in addition to that, the direction of the Imperial Theatres wanted to send him abroad to look for ballet stars. Disquieting rumors began to circulate; "Petipa is exhausted; Petipa is leaving." "They say in the theatre world that Mr. Petipa is leaving the service completely at the expiration of his contract," echoed the reviewer of "The Theatrical World" ("Teatralny Mirok").³⁷

Finally, in 1885, Petipa's authority suffered a blow which practically nullified his thirty-eight years' work in the Imperial ballet.

In a provincial summer theatre, under the most characteristic sign "Abandon Sorrow" ("Keen Groust"), Lentovsky, one of the first private theatre entrepreneurs, presented a "variety show," containing a slipshod operetta, a farce, and a galaxy of Italian dancers including the ballerina Virginia Zucchi, in a banal fairy-spectacle, "Flight to the Moon,"

—an ingeniously simple recipe for the saving of choreography.

The potency of this recipe may perhaps be found in the credo of Italian choreography as stated laconically and with bare clarity by Mme. Beretta, a former dancer and teacher of Milan, who had turned loose a group of ballerinas as representatives of the Italian school. "The elasticity and development of the muscles of the legs and arms—that is to what I pay principal attention. All these difficult *pas*, steel *pointes*, evolutions on *pointes*, are impossible to execute well without working many years. I do not recognize the priority of pantomime over technique. All this is nonsense. . . . We'll never understand what is to be communicated by pantomime anyway."³⁸

Here is the whole simple but, as a matter of principle, new attitude toward the means of dance performance.

Beretta considered "nonsense" the meaningfulness of the action and acting: for her the libretto was only a pretext, a reason for the dance. All dance movements must be subordinated to one aim—the overcoming of technical difficulties.

In defense of this theory, Mme. Beretta, and others like her, pointed to the degeneration of the French school of dance, and the stormy applause occasioned by the appearances of Italian ballerinas. These appearances made it look for a moment as if the classic ballet were having a true renaissance.

"The astonishing cleanness and ease with which the artist did a most difficult *pas* on *pointe*, a double *fouetté*, falling on her third turn into her partner's arms. . . ."

"Several times in succession she did three turns on *pointes* without the partner's help. . . ."

"The dancer spun twice around the whole stage (*jetés en tournant*, Y.S.), all the time accelerating the tempo, and suddenly stopped dead. . . ."

"Turning fast in an inclined position around the whole stage, she succeeded in

Sacrifices to Cupid. Group includes Preobrajenska and Legat I



stopping after every two steps to make a full turn on *pointes* in a perfectly perpendicular position. . . . ”

“She began her variation straight from the twelfth *entrechat-six* and then continued to dance for a long time.”³⁹

These quotations reveal expressively enough “the stunning” action of the new dances, which was more the result of a new emphasis than a new invention.

The development of an enormous technique, displayed with absolute ease and indefatigability (where the St. Petersburg dancers would long since have been in a faint) embellished with unrestrained coquetry which created an illusion of emotionality—this was the strength of the triumphant Italians.

Crowds of people flocked to Lentovsky's little theatre on the banks of the Nevka, until it became clear to the management of the Imperial Theatres that the visiting dancers could not be ignored, that such a policy would definitely undermine the native ballet.

The tacit fight between the St. Petersburg ballet and its upstart rivals had been going on for a long time when the Imperial court expressed a desire to see the guest artist in the Maryinsky theatre. In the face of unconcealed opposition and the necessity of learning an unknown role in a few days, Virginia Zucchi appeared in the Maryinsky theatre. Business took a gigantic jump upward. Her guest appearances alone brought into the box office more than the entire ballet season.

A purifying wind began to blow in the Imperial ballet, a wind raised by the “diabolic” turns of the Italian dancers. Later the wind developed into a storm when the Italian virtuoso-girls were joined by the phenomenal male dancer, Enrico Cecchetti.* This was the final blow, a blow which shook the

whole foundation of the St. Petersburg ballet, and overthrew Petipa.

A few years passed during which Petipa was creatively inactive, and then, suddenly, the flame of his glory blazed up with three-fold strength. By some miracle the prostrate Petipa emerged from the impasse of creative impotency to reach the heights of “The Sleeping Beauty,” “Raymonda” and other remarkable ballets created by him in the 90's—in spite of the Italian “invasion” and the artistic lethargy of the preceeding decade.

From 1881 to 1899 the administrative and artistic leader of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres was Ivan Vsevolojksy, a former functionary of the Ministry of the Interior. In contrast to his predecessors⁴⁰ Vsevolojksy was a cultured, well-educated and polished diplomat. A fairly good draftsman, he had acquired the speech and manners of a European, but never, for an instant, forgot his principal duty—to be the servant of his czar.

A glance at the conditions of his new field of responsibility convinced Vsevolojksy that since the dramatic theatre had deteriorated to the point where “it smelled like cabbage soup,” and the opera had become infected with impressionistic music, he had best concentrate his attention on fortifying the ballet.

The first step was to verify the fitness of Marius Petipa for this important task. Although the other candidates were not able enough from Vsevolojksy's point of view and Petipa was well known to the former heir and present “beloved monarch,” a few years passed before Vsevolojksy actually “signed-up” Petipa. At the beginning he watched him, studied his possibilities and inclinations, searching for weaknesses upon which he could eventually play. And then, in 1885, when Petipa was literally within a hair-breadth of artistic death; when, sitting in a half-empty theatre, he read in the newspapers of his resignation, and the superior talents of Virginia Zucchi, who was appearing at Lentovsky's—he was summoned to a con-

* See *Dance Index*, Vol. V, No. 7, July, 1946: Enrico Cecchetti by Vincenzo Celli.

ference about the renewal of his expired contract. Contrary to his expectations, he returned home with a long contract, and the title of "Ballet-Master-in-Chief."

The first thing Petipa did when he got home was to write a letter to his friend Sergei Khoudekoff, the boss of the press.⁴¹ "Please print this news in your newspaper. The direction of the Imperial Theatres, respecting my services, has renewed my contract for three years. This proves that my talent is appreciated in spite of the many ballet-masters, as for instance, the 'great talent—Hansen.'" (Ballet-master of the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre and subsequently of the Paris Opéra.)

From now on Petipa is "our man." Rewards, flattering testimonials and praise from Vsevolosky went hand in hand with friendly advice; advice changed into artistic assistance, collaboration and, finally, into full trusteeship. The proud old man who never before tolerated interference, now became a Russian subject, a trusty servant of His Excellency—a functionary of His Imperial Majesty's court. Vsevolosky's decision, his merest suggestions, became law for Petipa.

In 1885 he still "belonged to the Fronde," complaining in a letter to Khoudekoff about the pressure from the direction.⁴² In the 90's he obediently wrote down the director's remarks "for execution." "Next season I should shorten the scene of the precious gifts and the variations of the *pas de quatre* in the first act. This is the wish of the director . . ." ("The Command of the King," 1890), "The director told me that in 'The Nutcracker' the boxes should spring open and out of them should come lead soldiers. It must be done and marked on the boxes . . ." (1891). "Find out from the director whether he will permit me to introduce clouds." ("The Pearl," 1895).⁴³

Although Petipa had never welcomed collaborators on the libretti of ballets, when Vsevolosky came forward with a plan for a libretto ("The Sleeping Beauty," "The

Nutcracker"), Petipa bowed respectfully and showered praise on him. Vsevolosky even figured as costume designer, and Petipa drew no more sketches of his own ideas, but deferred to "His Excellency's" wishes.

For Vsevolosky all these signs of enslavement and subordination were but the beginning. His goal was the full renunciation by Petipa of the principles of the romantic theatre. He wanted Petipa to become *mâitre des menus plaisirs* of the Imperial court—like the ballet-masters of Louis, the Sun-King, and that famous Noverre at the court of Marie Antoinette.

Since the czar's family went to the ballet to be amused, to be captivated, to relax from grave thoughts and affairs of state, it was clearly not the place for dramas or gloomy scenes of poverty and suffering. In His Imperial Majesty's theatre, everything had to be gay, festive and free of care, especially free of care. The ballet therefore needed a clever master of ceremonies, prepared to surprise their majesties with a pleasant novelty, rather than a choreographer.

All this Vsevolosky did not attempt to conceal. "It would be rather nice to begin the season glamorously. The court will arrive in St. Petersburg early, and you know yourself how fond it is of novelties. . . . Whatever it will cost, *we* must have something new"⁴⁴ he wrote to Petipa, and the underscored "we" indicated that they had already come to an understanding.

Any such understanding was more apparent than real, for Petipa could not change over so quickly. For several years he struggled to reconcile bureaucratic loyalty with the ideals of his youth.

After the production of "The Vestal," it was obvious even to his former comrades that things were coming to a head. "From 1888 to the end of his career Petipa seemingly renounced his former direction. He became indiscriminate in the selection of subject matter and chose entirely meaningless motifs."⁴⁵



Costumes by Vsevelojsky for The Sleeping Beauty

The first ballet of the newly converted Petipa, the ballet which revealed his new platform with extreme clarity, was "The Sleeping Beauty" (1890). It was followed by "Bluebeard" (1896), "The Seasons," "The Trial of Damis" (1900) and, finally, "The Magic Mirror" (1903), which was in line with the ballets mentioned, and which tragically concluded Petipa's career.

* * *

The analysis of each of these productions does not fall within the scope of our work, but it is important for us to isolate from them the general concept which, in its sum, adds up to the creative image of the new Petipa.

The above list includes only those productions which are most characteristic of him. Anything that did not coincide with the new line of approach, he either did with a minimum of interest or declined altogether. From the end of the 80's he began to give productions to other ballet-masters. As if he were ashamed of his old works, he entrusted the revival of most of them to others (Cecchetti, Lev Ivanov). On the rare occasions when he restaged them himself, he worked with a cruel, corrective hand, eliminating everything which contradicted his new practice. New works which deviated even slightly from the direction of "The Sleeping Beauty," he preferred to give away. Thus Lev Ivanov got "Swan Lake," in which Petipa left for himself the staging of the second act—"The Ball"—and the ideological direction of the ballet; and Enrico Cecchetti shared the work of "Cinderella."

"His Excellency," the minister of the court, suggested a maximum renovation in the personnel of the ballet troupe and Petipa, with a heavy heart, began the importation of European celebrities, against which he had protested for nearly thirty years. Moreover, from now on Russian dancers were admitted into the first ranks only when it pleased some member of the reigning house.

In his new role of arranger of court festivities, Petipa cleverly made much of all court

events. In honor of the arrival of "His Royal Highness Grand Duke Constantine" he composed "The Return of Polyorchetis"—a big heroic ballet in four acts.⁴⁶ The celebrations of coronations and various namedays took up a great deal of his time, as he would not leave the arrangement to anyone else. He was genuinely interested in his work, and mindful of the most minute responsibilities, even remembering to note on a sketch of some *mise-en-scene*: "12/1 is the fiftieth birthday of the prince. Must leave my visiting card or sign my name in the book."⁴⁷

Regarding the themes currently used for ballets, the "patriarch" of balletomanes, Alexis Plestcheef, had this to say: "Our choreography is living through a new epoch—the epoch of fairy-tales by Charles Perrault. In a short time three ballets—"The Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," "Bluebeard"—were taken from these fairy-tales and, it goes without saying, not because of the wishes of the gifted ballet-master, who cannot sympathize with the accession of this new kind of spectacle."⁴⁸ He was badly mistaken in one thing. Petipa was not only in full sympathy with the "new kind of spectacle," but had, himself, created it. Even the last opus of this series, "The Magic Mirror," was a reprise of the same "Sleeping Beauty."

Apart from fairy-tales, the ballet leaned toward the elegance of the French school. Even "Raymonda," history notwithstanding, had become a French ballet. In this manner Vsevolozsky paid a veiled tribute to the Russo-French alliance.

Petipa never was an original librettist. One could easily identify the late 18th and early 19th century libretti from which he borrowed the themes for his new ballets. But now he lost his last connection with the contemporary realistic, and lately romantic literature, and withdrew completely into the 18th century to search for subjects which could be turned inside out and renovated. This withdrawal into history was characteristic of the reactionary mood of Petipa, who

until recently had been considered the successor and direct follower of his teacher, Perrot. Now, the determination to divorce himself completely from the principles of Perrot led him so far as to repudiate his master openly by concluding the revival of "Corsaire" (1891) with the notation: "'Corsaire' by Saint-Georges and Mazilier, but not by Perrot."⁴⁹

Since for Petipa the plot of the ballet was of no decisive importance, the use of dance as an expressive means in the development of the action also became irrelevant. Even the *pas d'actions* in his productions of this period lost the characteristics of action, with the possible exception of the one in Act 2 of "Raymonda." In "Bayadère," and other ballets, Petipa had aimed at movements which ran thematically through the entire production, but now the critic, Akim Volynsky, wrote of him: "In general, dramatic construction is not the lot of his talent. . . ."⁵⁰

In the revival of old ballets he nearly always augmented them with interpolated dances, dwarfing and confusing the dramatic action to the point where it lost all meaning, while the new productions appeared to have no more *raison d'être* than as a background for the display of virtuosity by the *première danseuse*.

* * *

Let us turn to "The Sleeping Beauty," unquestionably the best composition of Petipa's last period, which began "the golden series" of his productions and bore the characteristics of his subsequent works.

In theatrical practice the libretto of "The Sleeping Beauty" had figured before. As far back as 1829, "The Sleeping Beauty," with music by Herold, was staged by Jean Pierre Omer in Paris. There is much superficial resemblance between the libretti of Omer and Petipa. The general development of the plot, the character of the fairy Carabosse and her suite and the journey to the kingdom of the Sleeping Beauty are similar in both versions. But the basic principles of the two bal-

lets are profoundly different.

Where Omer's heroes and fairies are a gay, amusing lot, even faintly absurd, Petipa had a sincere faith in them.

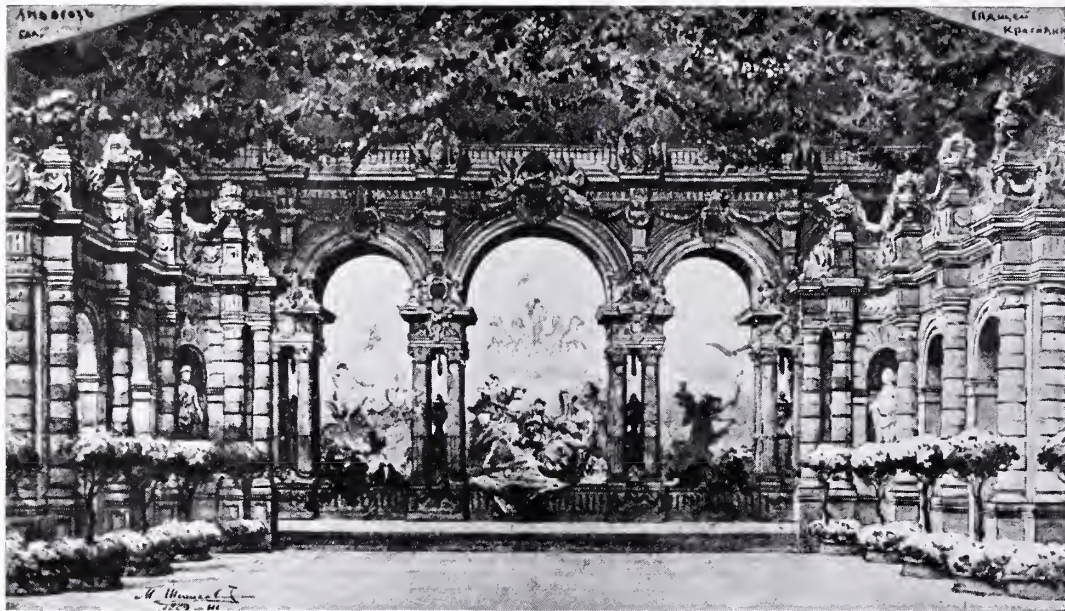
In the Russian production, the story itself was treated symbolically, adding dramatic pathos to the finale of Act 1, when Aurora, the royal offspring, is threatened with death. The character of the fairy Carabosse was delineated as an impotent, wicked and comic old hag in order to avoid a generalized image of evil.

Not until the period of impressionism in ballet (after the revival of "The Sleeping Beauty" in 1914) did the image of Carabosse approximate Tchaikowsky's conception of the role.

It was "The Sleeping Beauty" which established the form of the "ballet Paysan." (The Russian interpretation of the French "paysan" had a special connotation, which bestowed an aura of unreal, theatrical glamour upon peasantry as a class. In ballet programs of that period peasants were never called "krestainie," the Russian word for peasants, but always "Paysanie," A.C.)

Unquestionably, the libretto of "The Sleeping Beauty" is dramaturgically bad: it lacks action and plot development. Dance episodes, *adagios* and *pas d'actions* are scattered about in profusion and with the exception of the already mentioned finale of Act 1, there is not a single minor note among them. Everything is in a major key, triumphal, self-satisfied and confident. Petipa's feeling of cold repose is so strong, so much a matter of principle, that on occasion he misses the essence of Tchaikowsky's music, unable or unwilling to absorb its excitement, its joyous throb and irony.

The break between Petipa and Tchaikowsky in "The Sleeping Beauty" is noticeable from the very first measures. From a formal point of view Tchaikowsky followed instructions to the letter (plot indications, tempi needed for the dances, individual touches, etc.): all numbers were composed as Petipa



Setting by Schischkov for **The Sleeping Beauty**. Before the Palace of Prince Charming

wanted them. But the superficial compliance masked a fundamental difference of opinion in several places.

For Tchaikowsky the plot of "The Sleeping Beauty" was only a fairy tale, a mere pretext for the expression of musical ideas—the struggle of the sun, light, happiness against the cold dark forces of nature.

To Petipa, inspired by Vsevolozhsky, the fairy-tale background was the fulcrum of action which developed in earnest: the fate of Aurora, heiress to the king's throne, her court environment, the fight of Prince Desire and the good fairies for her life and happiness—all this represented in allegorical form the humble love and respect of the Russian people for their Imperial ruler.

The very march with which the performance opens introduces us, according to Tchaikowsky's conception, into the fairy world. Yet to this music Petipa conceived a ceremonial parade—a formal entrance into the stately atmosphere of the king's throne room. Repeatedly and deliberately Petipa scorned

the whimsical humor of Tchaikowsky's music. Only when the action had been brought to a happy end did the collaborators discover a mutually sympathetic feeling for their work which resulted in such ingenious choreographic images as the mass waltz of Act 1, the dances of the Bluebird, the precious stones, the cats, and Red Riding Hood in the last act.

Petipa's inventive genius, his concern with details and props, his predilection for the grandiose and general indifference to plot activity are clearly exemplified in "The Sleeping Beauty." The ballet became a concert of soloists and a succession of *tableaux vivants*. The entrance of the fairies, the grand adagio of the prologue, the scene of the weavers, the group waltz of the *paysans*, the *pas d'action* of Act 1, the fairy-like scene of the falling asleep of Aurora when she pricks her finger, the beginning and the panorama ending of Act 2—all these possessed the features of *tableaux vivants* and bore the stamp of retardation peculiar to

the new stage of Petipa's creative power. (Where the choreographer of the romantic ballet spent, say, one minute on a pantomimic dialogue, Petipa wasted at least two minutes.)

The pantomime in "The Sleeping Beauty" was empty and unconvincing, overburdened with conventional gesticulation. The point was not in the over-long musical passages, as the dilettantes of ballet and music were trying to assert in those days, but in Petipa's perception of the tempi of the performance, since he presented detailed calculations of timing to Tchaikowsky.

The dividing line between group and solo dances is very clear in Petipa's work of that period. He approached the composition of the one and the other entirely differently. The *corps de ballet* was used either to afford a rest period for the soloists (the waltzes in "Raymonda" and "The Sleeping Beauty," the dances of the treasures in "Bluebeard") or as climactic emphases in which the soloists took a momentary part in the dance, interweaving their solo parts with the general chorus. (The concluding mazurka in "The Sleeping Beauty," *grand pas classique* in the last act of "Raymonda," *Ballabile* in "Bluebeard," etc.)

Here Petipa knew no rivals. In the theatrical realization of this method, he is hardly surpassed by succeeding choreographers. Even his enemies, even the "new" ballet of Fokine-Benois and others who have renounced Petipa, who have denied at the beginning their successive tie with him, even they recognize Petipa's power in composing concluding ensembles.

A. Volynsky notes correctly that in Petipa's mass dances 'there are everywhere lines and figures which harmonize with one another and create the impression of one line and one figure. The element of disunity and individualization is remote from and foreign to him, especially in the application of this element to *corps de ballet* masses. Arms are set in identical movements. Torsos and heads

in the lines of the crowd maintain the same position. . . ."⁵¹ "For this reason the work, losing in dramatic effect, always gains in diapason and breadth."⁵²

With a few isolated exceptions, Petipa maintained the procedure of the 50's, as far as technique of the mass dance was concerned. Excluded from the action, the ensemble numbers became danced intermissions or a background of monotonous simplicity against which the technique of the soloists might appear especially brilliant. Only in the concluding "round-ups" did he display the entire variety of the enriched contemporary dance.

The ensemble numbers in the middle sections of the ballets were distinguished by their stateliness and ornamental effectiveness but in the concluding dances—all Petipa's attention was directed toward the delineation of "bits." One after another, and each according to his style, the soloists appeared, merging at last with the whole panorama and the final phrases of the music. (Mazurka in "The Sleeping Beauty," the final dance in Act 2 of "Harlequinade," etc.)

Regarding theatrical characterization, Petipa had not lost his native wit and inventiveness, but an episode related by A. V. Shiriaeff shows what the attitude was toward his attempts at bringing in character: "In 'Bluebeard' Petipa was staging a Norman dance for the *corps de ballet*, a somewhat vulgar number, where the male dancer was supposed to grab his female partner by the buttocks and throw her from one place to another. The dancers protested, considering this improper. Petipa appeared puzzled. 'What is improper here? In my country it was always done this way and no one considered it improper,' he retorted, and insisted on the execution of the bit. But in the performance the action was eliminated—he changed the dance."⁵³

Whether Petipa himself changed his mind after the rehearsal, or whether the director prompted the change, is immaterial. For the

Imperial Theatre, even in later years, this gesture was of course indecent.

The character dances of that time were but reprises of Petipa's old works. It was perhaps for this reason that he entrusted to Lev Ivanov the staging of Liszt's Second Rhapsody in "The Humpbacked Horse," thus avoiding the inescapable problem of introducing new intonations into the Hungarian dance. More than that, Petipa's character dances closely approached classic dances, bearing slight resemblance to their original national source, their sharp accents and various liberties obscured. A striking instance in this respect is Petipa's work on "The Halt of the Cavalry."

Much personal initiative and energy was needed by the dancers to preserve, in the classic ballet, even the little reserve of character dancing with which the ardent propagandists of this style (the ballet-masters of the romantic theatre and Saint-Léon) had enriched choreography.

On the other hand, the classic solo dances staged by Petipa have an entirely new specific gravity in the ballet, new ingredients, and a new purpose.

From the Italian dancers, Zucchi, Cornalba, Brianza, Petipa learned a new technique of the solo dance designed to display athletic virtuosity rather than new variations within the old canonical forms. In "The Sleeping Beauty" the Italian dance made its brilliant entrance upon the Imperial stage.

Long before the full choreographic score of "The Sleeping Beauty" was ready, even before the music was written, Petipa marked the names of his candidates for this or that role simultaneously with the first lines describing the future dances. His need to visualize the dance from the aspect of the performer predetermined, to a certain extent, his composition of the solo dance.

Though there was no individualization of movement in Petipa's mass dances, in solo parts he clearly showed his dependence on individuality. Watching close to a score of

solo dances in "The Sleeping Beauty" one notes their endless variety, coupled with a distinct compositional conception of each of them.

A Petipa variation possessed a clearly expressed leading idea; either the exposition of the individual properties of a particular dancer (this is the Saint-Léon function of a variation), or the illustration of pictorial subject matter. Petipa never sacrificed the clarity of the design for details. In any variation of the period which began with "The Sleeping Beauty" a dance motif was always apparent. This motif might be embellished with *fioritura*, but only within limits so as not to obscure or break the basic choreographic key. In this lies his superiority, even over some of our contemporary choreographers.

Petipa's choreography in "The Sleeping Beauty" had no unfinished lines, no sketchy outlines of body movements or series of periods, exclamation points, etc. such as were noticeable in the romantic and impressionistic ballets. Precisely wrought phrasing, perfection of design, distinctly established poses, sharply underlined periods, completeness of every movement of the body—these were the characteristics of his personal response to the new virtuoso-acrobatic dance.

In "The Sleeping Beauty" solo dances of the illustrative kind predominate, and most of them are of very high choreographic quality. (For instance, the dances of "Puss-in-Boots and The White Cat," "Red Riding Hood," "Blue Bird" from the last act of the ballet.) There is a minimum of extraneous movement, two or three *pas* conveying the whole character of the episode (*pas de chat* in the first, a run on *pointes* in the second, jumps, flights and *brisés* in the third). These basic *pas* dominate the dances; all other movements being interpolated merely to consolidate and set them off.

Petipa's genius for pictorialization, so rich in humor, wit and inventiveness, enabled him to create dance-movements which were

wholly communicative, easily comprehensible. The quarrel between Puss-in-Boots and the White Cat, for which he cast away the ballet canons of arm movements, and the movements on *pointes* of Red Riding Hood, denoting fright, were unquestionably a great success. The no less delightful variations of the fairies in the prologue have retained their compositional inventiveness even to this day.

The sorry plight of the male dance in "The Sleeping Beauty" as well as in the other ballets of this period presents a vivid contrast.

Petipa was a former classic dancer himself, a brother of the *premier danseur* of the Paris ballet, a pupil of Vestris, one of the dynasty of kings of the male dance. In his youth he saw the domination of the male dance in ballet, yet now he remained cool toward the renaissance of the *danseur* in ballet. "Petipa did not value sufficiently the artistic possi-

bilities of the male dance. Actually he created only the idea of the cavalier who accompanies the lady in *adagio*. In Petipa's plans the male dance always played a subordinate secondary role. He narrowed down this art form, squeezed it into a lady's corset."⁵⁴

Noting correctly the status of the male dance in Petipa's ballets of the last period, Volynsky is wrong in blaming Petipa for it. No one in the Vsevolozhsky era believed in the artistic possibilities of the male dance. Many rejected it before that time. One has only to read the later criticisms of Gautier and other French critics of the 40's-60's. Since the court circles were antipathetic toward the male dance, Petipa obediently "squeezed it into a lady's corset" until the energetic "foreigner" Cecchetti revitalized and reinstated it. The observant veteran of the ballet, T. Stoukolkin, noticed the change in the psychology of dancers brought about by Cecchetti: "He stimulated a competitive spirit among our ballet youth; they began to watch him, to study and perfect themselves."⁵⁵

Cecchetti was made head instructor of men in the ballet school, but the results of his work were not noticeable for several years. (The remarkable episode of the Blue Bird in "The Sleeping Beauty" was due to his brilliant, personal performance rather than to his precepts.)

In 1896 one of his pupils, Kiakst, created a tremendous sensation in the *pas de deux électrique* of the last act of "Bluebeard," and two years later Petipa was being congratulated for his unequalled "Dance of Four Cavaliers" (last act of "Raymonda"). Cecchetti had indeed regenerated the male dance.

Another new influence on the ballets of this period was the emergence of Alexander Glazounov as a ballet composer. His collaboration with Petipa overshadowed the success of his predecessor, Tchaikowsky, the grandiose construction of "Raymonda," in its last act alone overwhelming the scale of

Bluebeard. Group includes Legnani, Preobrajenska and Legat III



"The Sleeping Beauty" by the scope of its unusual skill.

In 1900 in the Hermitage Theatre, Petipa and Glazounov staged two one-act ballets, "The Trial of Damis" and "The Seasons," designed as court performances. Petipa devoted a great deal of effort to the former, which contains the quintessence of "The Sleeping Beauty," "Bluebeard" and "Raymonda."

Based on a plot concerning disguises and mistaken identities, this trifle, which carried the title of one of the series of Versailles ballets, "The Pranks of Love" (or "The Trial of Damis") was dressed in costumes after Watteau and staged with decor borrowed from the paintings of Lancret.

Toward the end of his career Petipa unexpectedly broke loose from the limited circle of choreographic methods within which he had enclosed himself until now. It is difficult to believe that "Harlequinade" (1900) was the work of the author of "The Sleeping Beauty" and other monumental works. The fresh and vital elements in Petipa's genius, long buried as a result of "the cultural guidance" of Vsevolozsky and his own self-denial, burst into flower with an abundance of action dances and a lively spirit of humor and gaiety. Some of the details undoubtedly inspired Fokine in his "Carnaval" and have moved, in part, into "Harlequinade" as reconstructed by Theodore Lopoukhoff (Maly Opera Theatre in Leningrad). How this ballet was born we don't know; but it did not have the success it deserved, in spite of the fact that it was richly produced. The Hermitage Theatre could not welcome "buffoonery," even though it was staged by "His Majesty's soloist."

* * *

The 20th century ushered in a decidedly new taste in all forms of art, and among balletomanes there was talk about the senility of Petipa's creative powers. In the wake of impressionism, the baroque lost its hold on the public; there was no place at the Mary-

insky Theatre for the long, loosely constructed fairy-tale.

Much in these ballets was irritating. The lack of character and the dullness of color and design in the sets and costumes, of Bocharoff, Levott, Ponomareff, etc. could not, of course, compare favorably with the brilliance and pungency of the canvases of Korovin, Benois, Vroubel, Golovin and others. The *dansante* music of Pugni and Minkus which drowned the individual masterpieces of Delibes, Tchaikowsky and Glazounov did not contain a single thought or theme which would correspond to the impressionistic point of view, and which could be interpreted in the living language of the dance.

The poverty of plot and mediocrity of dramaturgy were all too apparent to people developing strong sympathies toward Russian literature and poetry of the beginning of the 20th century.

Finally, the dance, presented outside the meaning and aim of the subject matter, did not secure the emotionally dramatic function of the performance, but brought the ballet down to the level of a demonstration of the performers' technique, which veered from the theme of the performance.

To Petipa's misfortune, Ivan Vsevolozsky, his guide, partisan and defender, left the theatre. In 1901, the cavalry colonel Vladimir Telyakovsky assumed control in St. Petersburg as well as Moscow, where he had been Director of the Imperial Theatres for some time. His vigorous activities in Moscow were all directed toward modernizing opera and ballet performances, encouraging impressionist artists, pushing forward "his own people" in opposition to St. Petersburg (that is how A. Gorsky became ballet-master of the Bolshoi Theatre) and commissioning music from contemporary composers.

Now he began an offensive on the citadel of the feudalistic aristocratic art—the St. Petersburg ballet, and its ideologist—Petipa.

The environment favored Telyakovsky. Around Petipa there had long since grown

up young forces, held in the grip of the half-century old choreographic monopoly of Petipa and his ballerinas. Nicholas Legat, Michel Fokine, Alexander Gorsky, Tamara Karavina, to some extent Pavlova, and other new dancers felt stifled in the cumbersome, empty and antiquated choreographic structures of Petipa. They read the poet-symbolists, admired the artists of "The World of Art," frequented symphonic concerts where they heard the impressionistic works of Rimsky-Korsakoff, Debussy, Ravel and Strauss. All this engendered a feeling of hostility to the old ballets. For them Petipa was a stronghold of reaction, a kind of "Pobedonostzeff of the ballet."

With the help of Telyakovsky and over the head of Petipa, his former pupils, the brothers Legat, staged "The Fairy Doll" in settings and costumes by Leon Bakst at the Hermitage Theatre. Ballerinas and ballet masters were imported from across the border and under Petipa's very eyes his favorite work "Don Quixote" (1903) was re-staged, and the gifted reviser (another former pupil) A. Gorsky, "forgot" to mention Petipa's name.

The liberal bourgeois press talked louder about the dominance of Petipa and the necessity of replacing him. Telyakovsky, taking into consideration the bourgeois ticket-buyer, reduced the number of subscription performances and admitted into the Maryinsky Theatre a new spectator, who had his own tastes and to whom Petipa was known at best as an authority of the past, of yesterday.

A new ballet was being prepared for Petipa's fifty-year testimonial performance. One which must, as a French newspaper said, "*couronner l'édifice*" of Petipa's creative genius.

On February 9, 1903 "The Magic Mirror," to music by Koreshchenko, in settings and costumes by A. Golovin, was presented in a gala performance.

Let us give the floor to an eyewitness, the Director of the Imperial Theatres.

"All seats in the theatre were sold out for the new ballet, about which people talked for almost two years, the testimonial performance for the famous Petipa. Tales about the forthcoming novel spectacle interested everybody. The Imperial box was filled by members of the Imperial family. At eight o'clock sharp the dowager empress Maria Feodorovna and the czar with the young empress arrived. The ministerial box was also filled with invited persons of high society."⁵⁶ They came to greet their bard who had served three emperors, to see another song dedicated to "grandeur of autocracy," to "be treated to" a tempting novelty. ("Well, with what will you treat us tonight?" asked the minister of the court.⁵⁷)

And suddenly, instead of an ecstatic roar, "There were whistles, shouts and noise in the audience; in the intermissions there were stormy scenes; the noise did not abate during the entire act. Some people began to shout 'Curtain.'" The greatest celebration turned into a loud scandal and this decided the fate of the production. "The Imperial box was definitely dissatisfied with the ballet. The minister also did not like the ballet."⁵⁸

Petipa fell. A week later, after mixed reports about the testimonial performance, rumor began to whisper about Petipa's resignation. In hostile circles a new candidate was already being discussed, and the newspaper "Birjevye Vedomosti" printed the following sensational announcement: "The ballet company will have to get used to a new ballet master, A. Gorsky. He will stage his own versions of 'The Humpbacked Horse' and 'Swan Lake.' He stages both ballets entirely differently and in a much more original manner."⁵⁹

This article was widely read and commented upon; various conclusions were drawn from it, but the direction remained silent. A year later Petipa resigned, with the lifelong rights of a ballet master, and a pension. But when, a short time afterwards, he wanted to pass onto the stage, an attendant

announced: "I was told not to let you in, Marius Ivanovich," and shut the door of the theatre to him.

We cannot stop here to recount the details of "The Magic Mirror," but we consider it necessary to dispel the legend launched by Telyakovsky and his friends.

Petipa did not burn out, exhaust himself, or fail. Simply, there came an end to the theatrical policy for which Vsevolozsky had been training him. Under these conditions the very selection of the ballet "The Magic Mirror" was disastrous. Petipa knew very well all its defects. The music was being written without a definite compositional plan and on the pages of Koreshchenko's piano score we find notations by Petipa. He studied it and gave it a perfectly correct "characteristic": "Bad, long, not good"—such unflattering opinions are scattered throughout his notations. The music was unquestionably bad. Because of this Petipa could not work as confidently and quickly as he used to when the music was born first in his creative imagination.

"Petipa kept on changing what he staged."

"On December 23 I was at a rehearsal, everything was in working order, and I must say that there were many beautiful dances and groups. But in January Petipa again began to change the production." These entries in V. Telyakovsky's diary truthfully describe the confusion, unusual for Petipa, which resulted from the lack of a production plan to which the entire ballet would be subordinated.

But Petipa, himself, was guilty too. The complex of ideas of "The Sleeping Beauty" was mechanically transferred to "The Magic Mirror," where it appeared, in a bare and regenerated aspect. The number of dances was three times as great as in "The Sleeping Beauty." This was no longer a "mass," but an avalanche, a landslide, which was fatal to the ballet.

With the aid of Koreschchenko, the slowed down tempo of "The Sleeping Beauty" be-



Raymonda. Legnani and Legat III in the Hungarian Pas Classique

came moribund in "The Magic Mirror," and the huge choreographic structure, which the anemic music was powerless to support, oppressed and stifled. A year later, in Moscow, Gorsky staged a successful revival of it, but in St. Petersburg, the structure collapsed, burying its architect beneath it.

* * *

The aging Petipa presented a very different figure from the majestic, official portrait with which our account began. The praise and glory of his past successes were fading into dim memory.⁶⁰

It cannot be said that gifted ballet artists are necessarily deprived of posthumous fame. A century has passed into history, yet Taglioni and Elssler continue to serve as examples. Anna Pavlova will always be re-



Michael Fokine in *Harlequinade*

membered for her "Dying Swan," Nijinsky as the slave in "Pavillon d'Armide," the favorite slave in "Scheherazade," the Faun in "The Afternoon of a Faun." These images live in the memory of eye witnesses to our days. But of "the great dramatic actor" Petipa we have not a single vivid image.

The "gifted librettist" left no libretto of which we could be proud, to be cherished as

carefully as the libretti of "La Fille Mal Gardée," "The Hungarian Hut," "Giselle."

The "heir to all the best traditions" repudiated so many of them that we are forced to search over his head for ties with the masters he had rejected, and to criticize a number of the principles which he advanced.

In more than thirty years of teaching, the "excellent pedagogue" did not produce a single pupil whose talent remained a lodestar for subsequent generations.

The "great artist of the stage," the "author of a hundred ballets," is represented on the contemporary stage by but a few compositions. Many others, in spite of remarkable fragments, have disappeared from the stage because of bad dramaturgy and the banality of theme and dance numbers, which, though excellent in concert performances, are meaningless in a stage production having a plot.

Does this mean that Petipa is an inflated figure, a fictitious genius, a pitiful epigone? It might be so interpreted, yet all the shortcomings and defects we have enumerated do not lessen the great part he played in the destinies of Russian as well as world choreography.

Let us compare, as an example, the histories of the Moscow and the St. Petersburg ballets.

On the threshold of the 20th century, the St. Petersburg ballet was a great vital organism, rich in performers, choreographers, and repertoire, stimulated by ideologists who expressed different artistic viewpoints.

The Moscow ballet did not have a single platform, or a leader even remotely approaching the stature of Marius Petipa. It met the 20th century in a state of collapse; it lacked a repertoire of any value which it could call its own; it lacked first dancers, ballet-masters, in short, it was in a state of complete artistic impotence.

Petipa was the "Ivan III," "the unifier" of the Russian ballet, which, due to him, remained intact amid the chaos and ruin of the European ballet. True, the fact that the

system of state ballet education had been preserved in Russia played an important part, since it assured the necessary length of training (seven-eight years).

But it was not enough to preserve the school. It was also necessary to retain the inviolability of unified methods of teaching the classic dance which dated back to the 17th-18th centuries. At the end of the 19th century the French school had already lost, stylistically, its aesthetic attractiveness. The soft effeminate poses, the "drooping" arms, the languid elegance of movements which did not tolerate quick and sharp contrasts, the simplicity which turned into a mannerism of technical backwardness, all these signs of degeneration had already become apparent toward the 80's.

But even here Petipa made the right move. He did not surrender to the Italian ballerinas and dance methods, as they did in Moscow. There the capitulation led to a gradual destruction of the fundamentals of the classic dance, to a bloom of dilettantism which was advanced at the beginning as a right to individuality, in short, to the manifestations which are typical of the followers of the Italian school of dance.

Though he permitted examples of the Italian dance on the stage in the persons of Zucchi, Cornalba, Brianza, Legnani, in the school Petipa maintained the old system of choreographic pedagogy, which Enrico Cecchetti, the most brilliant representative of the Italian school, was cautiously attempting to break and renovate. In countenancing two opposing trends on the stage, and a gradual undermining of the old methods in the school, Petipa, without realizing it himself, prepared the ground for a new school of the classic dance, the Russian, which received its final recognition after the revolution.

Despite his conservatism, Petipa showed himself more tolerant than his Western European colleagues who had long since discarded and forgotten such "pleasant trifles" as the old fashioned "La Fille Mal Gardée"

(1786), "Giselle" (1841), "Esmeralda" (1848), "Corsaire" (1858). In St. Petersburg these ballets, revised according to the demands of the time, served as living examples and sources of creative ideas for young actors and ballet-masters.

And when, in 1909-1910, the classic dance, dead in the West and newly "discovered" by Michel Fokine and the artists of the St. Petersburg ballet, was making its triumphant invasion of Paris, Berlin and London, Marius Petipa, then in his last days, had every reason to consider that he had fulfilled his historic mission.

The great genius of Petipa is unquestionable. To create a multi-act choreographic spectacle in which there is enough sweep, intensity and interest to last a whole evening is not easy. In the West this art was already dying when Petipa made his first choreographic experiments. The obstacles were many. Plot-possibilities of the old ballet were greatly limited thematically and dramatically; pantomime as an art was not in style (and also was not within the methods of Petipa), and there was only a limited demand for the character dance. In spite of all this, Petipa knew how to distribute his dance material in such a way that his plotless *divertissement* increased in intensity throughout the whole act.

We know the elementary truth: the number of basic movements, just as that of colors and tones, is less than ten, but the combinations of them are endless. The works of Petipa vividly prove it in practice. His gift for combinations was inexhaustible; even in his old age, he could rekindle the fire of his inventiveness.

The richness of Petipa's choreographic lexicon far surpasses that of our young choreographers, for whom his vocabulary is still unattainable. One has only to compare any contemporary composition with Petipa's work to estimate his superior command of dance language. The *pas de trois* and the *grand pas* from "Paquita," the variations in

the dream scene and the whole *grand pas classique* in "Raymonda," the dance of the spirits in "Bayadère," the divertissements numbers from "Bluebeard"—scores and hundreds of separate dances bear witness to the wealth of Petipa's resources. But, even more important were the clarity of plastic and emotional ideas, the skill in calculating force, the exceptional simplicity in the choreographic design of the most complex dance combinations—these are the merits of Petipa. Few masters of the contemporary ballet possess this heritage.

A serious charge has been preferred against Petipa, one which could well be preferred against several of our contemporaries: he has been accused of limiting the lexicon of the dance to a single technique, a practice which deprives any composition of individuality, robs it of meaning, emasculates the emotional design, destroys distinguishing features conditioned by period, country, etc.

This is a grave accusation, in view of the problem of creating a thematically contemporary ballet. Instead of exercising every means of expression in conformity with the premises of production (period, time and place of action, theme, its direction, style, emotions, images), in the years of "The Sleeping Beauty" and "Raymonda" Petipa's vocabulary was inflexible, destroying what was alive, truthful and convincing in the production. To what disastrous results this can lead we have seen recently in the production of "The Bright Stream," the failure of which was due, in part, to the gap between its content and its means of expression.

But to blame Petipa for this would be to forget the conditions of the 90's. A similar charge can be preferred against many composers and writers of that period. Petipa's invention was at its richest when dramaturgy and active stage direction played a decisive part in his creations.

Can one speak of Petipa's "classicism only" when comparing his corrective-compositional work in "Giselle," in the dance of the spirits

in "Bayadère" (1876), the *pas de trois* from "Paquita" (1881) and episodes in "Harlequinade" (1900) and "The Sleeping Beauty"? Only such a juxtaposition can establish an historical perspective from which to pass judgment on him.

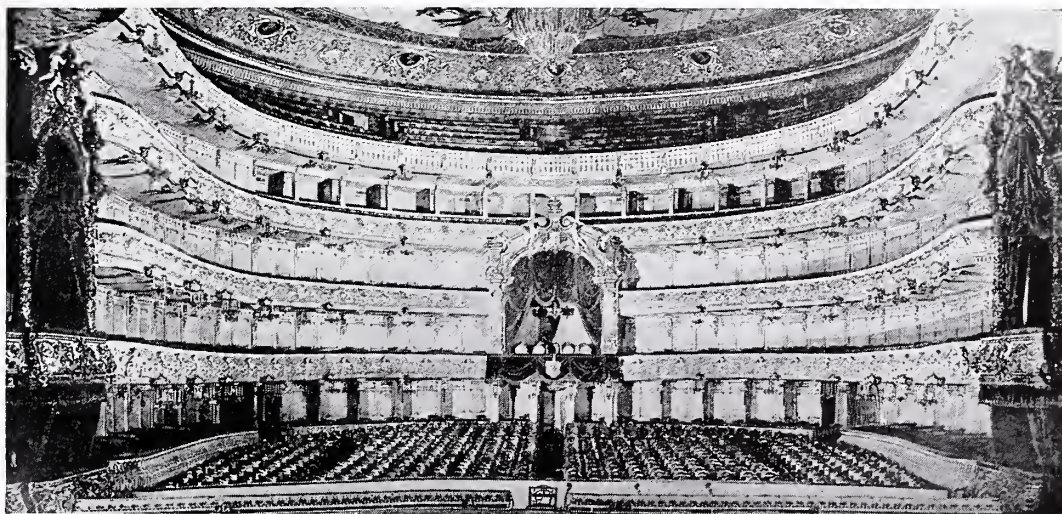
* * *

It is customary to regard the creation of a ballet as a process demanding constant inspiration, intuition and creative foresight, in which the choreographer, amid the chaos of the accidental and the valueless, composes first-rate dance episodes. All those who wrote about the classic ballet of the 19th century described it in just this manner.

If we turn to his contemporaries to discover something about Petipa's methods of creation, we find nothing but fatuous praise. Still more superficial is the attitude of students of the ballet who wrote about Petipa's work after his death.

It is asserted that he staged dances as an artisan, not as an artist depending on his intuition; that, in his ignorance, he disregarded the music, finding it too complicated for his primitive conceptions, and as a matter of principle, eliminating from it everything that did not suit him; that he never thought about *mise-en-scène*, was not interested in the libretto, and ignored matters of decor. These assertions appear in the press even now.

Actually, Petipa's methods of work on a ballet were serious, interesting and instructive.⁶¹ We have only to look at any page of the modest remains of the colossal Petipa archives, preserved in Moscow at the Bakhrouchine Theatrical Museum, to be convinced of his enormous skill. Furthermore, we know enough about his background to refute such wholesale accusations of ignorance. A ballet actor of the fourth generation (his ancestors danced in Paris in the early 18th century), he began to study dancing at the age of seven, and at sixteen was already a choreographer. He took a course in theory of music with the famous Fetis (probably Adolphe L. Eugene Fetis, 1820-1873, A.C.),



Interior of the Maryinsky Theatre

and studied the violin for several years at the conservatory of music.

We must also remember during what period he worked. Neither the dramatic nor the operatic theatres of the past century had experienced the single will of a stage director. Ideological and artistic differences among playwright, composer, actor and decorator were a characteristic manifestation of that epoch.

Petipa's work on a ballet began with scattered notes on visiting cards, bills, pages of letters, bits of paper. He collected clippings from geographic, ethnographic and archeological magazines, and extracts from musico-theatrical sources concerning the origin and character of various theatrical movements (waltz, *bourrée*, etc.) and their descriptions. Among these we find notes with reference to future works. "In the next ballet which I am going to stage I want to use these new movements"; then follow sketches of the movements.

Next came the libretto, which he received from somebody or composed himself. There are many of these in the archives, each subjected to critical discussion, revisions and

numerous re-writings. Often two or three versions of an act are given. In the last version, which he finally selected, we see repeated signs of his struggle for literary articulation. Whether it was his own libretto or someone else's, it always went through stages of revision.

Parallel to the libretto, came endless notes (always before the composition of the music) describing the development of the stage action. This was definite but not final. Often, as a result of his work with the composer or even with the scenic designer, the description would be changed, although these changes did not alter the foundation. Incidentally, the further you follow Petipa in his documents, the more certain you are that the action in his ballets was swamped by dance-divertissements as a result of pressure from outside circumstances.

Finally the working scenario was written out by scenes, and a clean copy of it made. Here, long before the production and the composition of the music (for "The Sleeping Beauty" and "The Nutcracker," a year and a half before, for "Raymonda" almost two years before, etc.), Petipa began his main



Pavlova and Fokine in **Camargo**

preparatory work: he gave the composer a detailed plan of the necessary musical accompaniment.

Jean-Georges Noverre demanded two things of ballet music: a rhythmico-melodic outline for the dance and a pictorial illustration of the stage action. Music in ballet exists in connection with the action, it helps the action and is subjected to its development on the stage. The problem is not the interpretation of music as a certain dominant characteristic of the ballet, but of musical accompaniment in the service of choreography.

Petipa shared Noverre's viewpoint. Whoever the composer might be—a worthless dilettante or the highly respected Peter Tchaikowsky—Petipa, as the author of the ballet, did not intend to yield one bit of the preeminence of choreography. From this premise stems the order in which he developed the component parts of the ballet. The choreographic exposition was always created first. It embraced questions of choreographic form, stage text, musical characteristics. Then came the musical exposition, pre-indicated to a substantial degree by the choreography; and last of all, the actual staging.

Those who assume that Petipa laid out the first musical plan only for Tchaikowsky are mistaken.

From the 60's to the end of his days, Petipa always worked with composers only according to a plan laid out by him beforehand. We find such plans in the documents of Glazounov, Pugni, Minkus, in short, of everybody who had worked with him. But the importance is not the creation of a pattern, so much as the manner in which Petipa did it.

At the moment of outlining the plan, Petipa, not yet in possession of the music, was already preparing the stage material of the future ballet. He built it on music which did not exist, but which he clearly heard in tempo, rhythm, character and even instrumentation. His preoccupation with music for the dance numbers and action scenes unquestionably afforded the composer good ideas.

What astonishes and wins us over in "The Sleeping Beauty" is Tchaikowsky's impressionistic manner in developing the figure of the fairy Carabosse. And now it turns out that Petipa carefully and vividly thought out all movements in his musical plan for Tchaikowsky.

As a graphic illustration we shall cite here a few examples of Petipa's libretto plan for Tchaikowsky ("The Sleeping Beauty"): (Petipa wrote down all texts in French).

"When the noise is heard—this is the fairy

Carabosse—give a very animated movement,” he writes down under No. 9.

“For Carabosse give music of a fantastic character.” (No. 10)

“After the conversation of the king and Carabosse change the music—it begins to be courtly, cajoling.” (No. 12)

Before the monologue of Carabosse “a whistling in the orchestra” (No. 14)

“After the account of Carabosse about the fate of the princess comes the triumph of Carabosse—give satirical, diabolic music. A short fantastic and grotesque dance for the pages of Carabosse” (No. 15)

Step by step in the musical libretto appear descriptions of action scenes and Tchaikowsky wrote these scenes, undoubtedly basing his composition on Petipa’s indications.

We have already called attention to the finale of Act 1, which played an important part in Petipa’s choreography since it was the only action scene. This episode was excellently developed by Petipa in the musical libretto. Here there is nothing in common with the plans he had been giving to Pugni and Minkus. Petipa was unquestionably of help to Tchaikowsky in solving his problems.

“No. 14. Suddenly Aurora notices the old woman who beats on her knitting needles a 2/4 measure. Gradually she changes to a very melodious waltz in 3/4, but then suddenly a rest. Aurora pricks her finger. Screams, pain. Blood streams—give 8 measure in 4/4, wide. She begins her dance,—dizziness. . . . Complete horror—this is not a dance any longer. It is frenzy. As if bitten by a tarantula she keeps turning and then falls unexpectedly, out of breath. This must last from 24 to 32 measures. At the end there should be a tremolo of a few measures, as if shouts of pain and sobs: ‘Father, Mother!’”

“And later, when everybody notices the old woman, she throws off her clothes. For this moment it is necessary that a chromatic scale sound in the entire orchestra. . . .”

The superbly witty dance of the “two cats” was suggested to Tchaikowsky by Petipa not

only by a descriptive phrase but by a very definite musical characteristic. “Repeated mewling, denoting caressing and clawing. For the end—clawing and screaming of the male cat. It should begin 3/4 amoroso and end in 3/4 with accelerated mewling.”

When speaking about dances Petipa was voluble and concrete in his suggestions. For the variation of the Fairy of Silver: “It is necessary that one should hear a peal of silver bells, tempo polka . . .” or the variation of the Fairy of Diamonds: “. . . diamond spangles should sparkle like electric sparks—3/4, vivace.”

In action scenes Petipa conceived the music in dialogue form. Here is how he indicated the entrance of the king in Act 1 and his conversation with the master of ceremonies who discovered the peasant women’s knitting needles: “No. 4, The King asks: What happened?

“Give 4 measures for the question and 4 for the answer. . . .”

For instance:

“Question—Where are you taking them?—4 measures.

“Answer—To prison.—4 measures.

“Question—What have they done?—4 measures.

“Answer—Points to the knitting needles—4 measures.”

Petipa offered suggestions not only about the tempi, rhythms and the number of measures of the music. He outlined a desired instrumentation and offered a choice of versions of it. Thus, for instance, he advised for Act 1: “No. 10. Aurora’s variation, pizzicato for violins, cellos and harps, or for lute and violins.” Tchaikowsky made a choice of the suggestions and created a beautiful, musico-dancing number, utilizing the recommended instruments.

We could give innumerable illustrations of Petipa’s thoughtful and positive participation in the composition of music for his ballets. Let us cite a few examples from “The Nutcracker,” particularly those pages of Tchai-

kowsky's score which are not dance numbers. For example, the entrance of Drosselmeier and the battle of the mice.

"No. 7. Enter Drosselmeier. For his entrance the chimes of the big clock ring. Very serious, somewhat frightening music" writes Petipa and, to emphasize the grotesque character of the scene, he adds "and at the same time comic. . . ." "Wide movement for 16 to 24 measures. Little by little the music changes its character (the children have calmed down at the sight of the toys. Y.S.). It becomes less sombre, lighter and finally, changes into joy. . . ."

From the entrance of Drosselmeier let us pass to the scene which precedes the battle of the mice.

"The stage is empty. . . . Clara returns. 8 measures of mysterious but sweet music. 8 more measures of still more mysterious music for Clara's entrance. 2 measures for her tremble of fright, 8 for fantastic and dance music. Rest. The clock strikes midnight. After the chimes of the clock a short tremolo. During the tremolo Clara sees how the owl turns into Drosselmeier with his cunning smile. She wants to run, but has no strength. After the tremolo—5 measures to hear the scratching of the rats and 4 measures for their whistling. After the whistling—8 measures of accelerating music ending in a chord." (Clara sat down in the armchair, everything disappeared. Y.S.)

"The Christmas tree grows and becomes huge—48 measures fantastic music "crescendo grandioso." The guard challenges: 'Who goes there?' The mice do not answer—2 measures for the challenge, 2—for the silence. One or two measures for the fright (the shot), 8—for the awakening of the drummers, and 8—for the alarm. From 4 to 8—for the preparation for the battle. Entrance of the king of the rats—sharp, angry music the sounds of which split the ears. . . . Clara throws her shoe—8 measures for a piercing scream and 6—for the whistling of the disappearing mice. The nutcracker is trans-

formed into a prince—one or two chords.

"Here begins pathetic music which flows into a pathetic andante and ends majestically."

These documents prove conclusively that Petipa was much interested in musical forms, orchestration and the symphonic development of the action. He built the musical plan not only from the aspect of the dance design—it would be strange if the staging of dances was not preeminent in his thoughts—but also from the point of view of music and its dynamics. Otherwise, why would he offer Tchaikowsky the above mentioned indications, why would he place before him the problem of the leading instruments in Aurora's variation in Act 1 and of the transition from a two-beat measure to a three-beat measure in the finale of Act 1 of "The Sleeping Beauty" and describe in detail the structure of the musical dialogue, etc.?

One wonders if Tchaikowsky would have been as successful with the "The Sleeping Beauty" and "The Nutcracker" without Petipa's collaboration in the musical dramaturgy of the ballets.

It is said that Tchaikowsky, "before composing the ballet "Swan Lake" had long been making efforts to find somebody who could give him accurate information about the music necessary for dancing."⁶²

Having given the "order" to the composer, Petipa would consider his work done or, even without waiting for the music, would stage the dance the way he imagined it at the moment of designing his plan.

Unquestionably, he considered the musical plan obligatory for himself and for the composer, using it as a point of departure in his preparatory work. The theatre and its actors, which determine the fate of the ballet, were of great moment to him. Having received the music, he would examine it, as well as his designs, again and again with reference to the possibility of a successful realization.

For this reason he complained in a letter:

"Glazounov does not want to change a single note in the variation of Legnani, nor still less make a single cut in the gallop."⁶³ (He speaks here about "Raymonda". . . . Y.S.) Petipa still considered the ballet unfinished, a rough draft, about which one should still think and think. This is what called forth his dissatisfied postscript in the quoted letter: "It is terrible to create a ballet with a composer who has sold his music in advance."⁶⁴

The respectful care with which Petipa looked through the scores of Tchaikowsky and Glazounov changed into unceremonious editing when he dealt with a composer who did not warrant attention. Such was his correspondence with Prince Troubetzkoy, the society author of the trashy music for "Pygmalion." Through its polite tone one notices the restrained anger of the great master who understood that he was dealing with a dilettante and an ignoramus. The matter ended when Petipa, after examining the first measures of the score, gave up and began to compose the dances before the music, which he decided to ignore.⁶⁵

When Troubetzkoy wrote to him that he protested not only against this but also against the musical corrections, Petipa replied very forcibly, referring to "the bitter fate" of the stillborn "Grapevine" by Rubinstein.⁶⁶

In the Petipa archives there are scores of his notes indicating how careful and attentive he was to music which he considered of high quality and which did not disagree with his conceptions. The cuts in "The Sleeping Beauty" can on no account be attributed to him. They are the handiwork of Richard Drigo and other conductors.

A telling example is Petipa's work on "Swan Lake" after the death of Tchaikowsky. The first version of the music, based on a pian by Julius Reisinger, was not satisfactory to the choreographer. Nevertheless he was very careful in his treatment of Tchaikowsky's music. He held it in high esteem and made cuts with regret, discarding only

that which was clearly unacceptable to the conditions of the theatre of the 90's.

Sketching in the dance of the swans, he made the reservation: "Provided there will be enough music for such an ending." Planning the waltz of the brides, he noted: "I must listen again to the music." Having already arranged the last scene with Drigo, he gave himself the order: "Listen again to the music of the last act. Can I include a solo dance?" (The dance was never included.)

And when, in the final version of the last scene he made up a definite list of participants, he categorically eliminated the possibility of staging a dance for the soloists, noting on the margin: "If I could do without them, it would be very good. This would conform with the music."

He spoke thus, we emphasize, only about music which deserved respect. The fact that he made a distinction between Tchaikowsky and Pugnî speaks, in any event, in his favor. And this difference in his approach to composers is obvious; one has only to compare the tasks given to Minkus, Pugnî and Tchai-

Don Quixote. Group includes Fedorova II and Mordkin



kowsky. To all composers, with the exception of Tchaikowsky and Glazounov, Petipa gave only tempo-metrical orders and the general characteristics of separate scenes (lively, sad, gay, etc.). Action scenes he did not even mention, apparently considering this useless. For Tchaikowsky, in particular, as we have already seen, Petipa found a picturesque language, gave him detailed descriptions of scenes, indicated elements of symphonic development of the episodes, etc.

He also realized the peculiarities of the talents of the various composers.

Thus, for instance, Petipa was worried about how to overcome a serious defect of Glazounov, his internal immobility. Having acquainted himself with the non-balletic works of Glazounov, he wrote, trying to soften his opinion, in a letter to the composer, dated June 16 (28), 1896: "I beg you, Mr. Glazounov, to give as little monotony as possible.⁶⁷ More exactly he designated this "monotony" in a letter to Khou-

dekoff: "The phlegmatic talent of Glazounov."⁶⁸

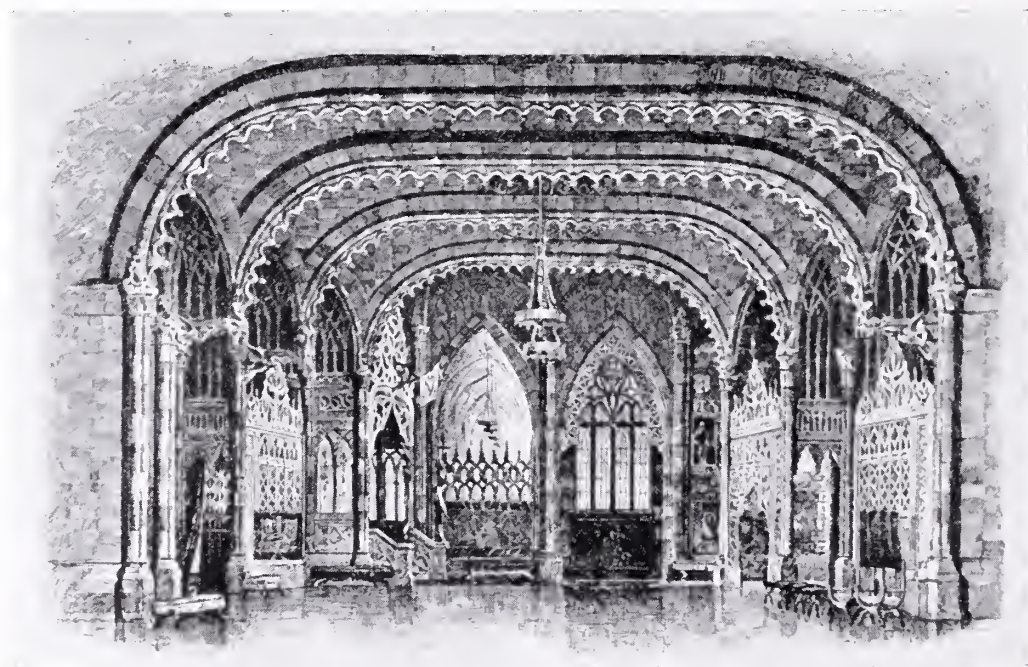
Simultaneously with the development of the musical plan he was busy with the detailed selection of material for the ballet in preparation.

In the folder of material for "The Sleeping Beauty" we find an excerpt about Louis XIV, who appears in the ballet, numerous extracts from dance dictionaries about court dances, and somebody's illustrations to Perrault's fairy-tales.

From here, in direct relation to the prepared exposition, he began to work on his third plan for the painter and decorator. The first plan was the working libretto, the second for the composer.

Here again we see the error of those authors who asserted that Petipa was totally indifferent to the pictorial realization of his ballets. For every act, for every character he offered his suggestions together with sketches of the *mise-en-scène* and costumes

Setting for **Swan Lake**. Act II, The Gothic Hall



which he drew roughly himself, describing them in detail, including suggestions for color and progressive selection of tones.

Here, for example, is an excerpt from his order for "The Sleeping Beauty." (It must be remembered that he gave this order to the artist who was at the same time the director of the theatre, a person who, for him, was the highest authority.)

"Apollo in the apotheosis is Louis the Sun-King in a different costume. The Fairies in the epilogue are such as the ones on the *plafonds* of the Versailles Palace, drawn with long trains." For Princess Aurora in the last act—"A big, long bridal costume; and for the *pas de deux* a short one."

And here are excerpts from his rough notes about "Swan Lake": "I must tell Bocharoff that for the first scene we need a set of medium size." For the last scene he gave the artist the *mise-en-scène*: "Owl, swans and apotheosis."

For every ballet he compiled a detailed list of props and when they were out of the ordinary he described them and copied drawings from various sources. Thus, for "The Vestal" (Roman themes were rare at the Maryinsky Theatre) he copied from somewhere drawings of musical instruments, arms, a statue of victory, insignia of Lictors, head-dresses of Centurions, regimental badges. For "Mlada" he drew headaddresses and wigs of the buffoons. Having begun work on "Swan Lake," he carefully drew the pole with the ribbons, around which was built the peasant dance, inspired by May folk-roundelays.

'The pole is 7 arshins (about 21 feet, A.C.) high. On the top is a basket with flowers and 24 long ribbons, the ends of which are held by the dancers. It should be fixed so that the pole does not revolve. I shall explain it in detail later. The long ribbons should be of three colors—light blue, yellow and red.'

In the same place we read: "24 little stools with a step, colors green and red, like garden benches. 24 dancers with short sticks

on the ends of which are many short ribbons, or one—must see what impression one makes, or the other."

It goes without saying that Petipa's artistic opinions were of his century. They died together with the theatrical painting which was close to him, making way for the artists of the group "The World of Art." But this does not minimize his merits: the creative participation in the pictorial realization of the ballet remains to his advantage in comparison with other choreographers.

Having finished with the musical and artistic realization, Petipa began a new, important *étape* of his work—the selection of performers. From the writings of Vladimir Telyakovsky it is known about Petipa that he, "by agreement with the balletomanes, selected female ballet artists for the execution of his ballets."⁶⁹ But documents preserved in the archives repudiate the suspicion that his principle of selecting performers was decisively conditioned by friendship and connections.

When the Saint-Léon method was firmly established at the Maryinsky—to stage the ballet for the first ballerina and *premier danseur*—the problem of selecting performers acquired a great importance in Petipa's work.

Beginning with the 70's, the Petipa archives contain, for every ballet, from three to five personnel lists of the artists of the ballet and students of the advanced classes, with notes by Petipa characterizing their suitability for each particular ballet. His notes speak of the seriousness of this work.

The principle of selecting people of the same height and the same figure for the ensemble dances was an ironclad law in his work. Though he would change the cast three or four times, he clung to one tendency, characteristic of a prudent boss and court entertainer: in the first rows of the *corps de ballet* he placed the *coryphées*, notwithstanding their privileged position, and disregarding the fact that in another ballet



Pavlova and Fokine in *Harlequinade*

the same artists might dance solos.

The serious, careful selection of performers is indicative of Petipa's method of work and very instructive for us. Frequently among his short marginal notes on the company's personnel lists, there appears the figure of this or that dancer with all her defects and qualities.

Only when the choreographic exposition, musical plan, decor, costumes, props and cast were absolutely clear in his mind did Petipa begin work on the actual composition of the ballet.

The composition of mass dances began in his study. On a drawing of the stage platform he wrote out, one after another, detailed *mise-en-scène*, passages, groupings, poses, the most complicated combinations including descriptions of movements, *pas* and sketches of positions of the bodies.

Even solo numbers did not "flow out from

the retorts of his immense choreographic imagination" as A. Volynsky asserts⁷⁰ but were the result of long preliminary work.

Saint-Léon had instilled into Petipa forever his method of composing solo dances: first to study the talents of the artist and then to compose a dance for her.

"He worked with soloists entirely separately. During this work he studied them carefully, sought out their good traits, made them practice the movements he found, and then built a dance in accordance with their talents. If he showed an already set movement, and the dancer could make nothing of it, he would change the *pas*."⁷¹ His solo numbers were built on the consideration of the special qualities and hidden weaknesses of definite people. For this reason we often see a dead, skeleton-dance of a once famous variation and wonder why it was ever successful. We forget that this number was created for a particular dancer whose temperament and personal style were an actual part of the dance.

Again for this reason, the annual revival of Petipa's ballets necessitated a preparatory stage each time, due to changes in the personnel of the company. If the specific talents of the new ballerina were foreign to the solo numbers already staged, and the music did not permit a change in the number, Petipa would unceremoniously change the music and stage an interpolated variation. The interest of the ballet as a whole, defined by the success of the ballerina, was more important to him than the integrity of the musical accompaniment. He dealt this way with all ordinary composers, even with Leo Delibes and Adolphe Adam, but never introduced foreign compositions into the scores of Tchaikovsky or Glazounov.

Now everything was ready for the first rehearsals. Petipa summed up his rough paper work with a sentence typical of his self-confidence: "I have finished. It's good." Yet almost always, we find at just this stage the following postscript. "I must watch the class

of Mr. Gerdt. . . . Watch the class of Mme. Vasem, Sokoloff . . . , ” etc.

Petipa, the “founder of the Russian ballet,” would visit classes like a modest neophyte of choreography. There in classroom combinations of movements, in the demonstration of studied technique, he sought new sharp expressions, sonorous phrases from the choreographic lexicon, which would help to develop anew the brilliance and richness of the dance in the forthcoming production.

* * *

A detailed and full analysis of the Petipa archives, in connection with his creations, is not possible here; but what we have said is enough to dispel the legends about the incapable dancing master, ignorant dictator, etc.

At the present time there is much talk about the necessity of lifting the shroud of “mystery” from the choreographer’s creative work and establishing a scientific system of training in this field.

We often hear objections, regrettably from professional circles: “This is impossible. Neither in the past nor in the present have there been objective principles upon which such instruction could be built.”

Petipa’s work is the best refutation of this lazy and, may I be forgiven, ignorant position. “But,” I will be told, “Petipa was an accidental phenomenon—a gifted singleton.” This is not true. The same method was used by scores of ballet-masters before him: Bournonville, Blasis, Didelot and Gloushkovsky left documents about it. They were all disciples of the very same Noverre whose theories on the collaboration between the authors of the ballet, with the choreographer as the organizer of the production, live to this very day and demand realization.

Actually, who among contemporary ballet composers receives from the choreographer musical plans—problems analogous in professional quality and vividness of details to those presented by Marius Petipa? Choreographers capable of evolving such plans are

unique. Who among artists, decorators and costumers of the ballet can say that the will of the choreographer, concretely expressed, has inspired his thoughts, has elevated the quality of his work?

Let us be frank about it: with rare exceptions our choreographers do not possess, on the level of contemporary demands, that complex of multiple knowledge which we saw in Petipa. The methods of his leadership and management of the separate parts of the ballet, his ability to think not only in dance terms but also in terms of music, painting and drama, were unique.

In an age when performances were composed of the varied activities and different principles of playwright, composer, librettist, actor and artist, he found in himself sufficient will power, professional knowledge and skill to dominate the scene as the truly authoritative author of the ballet, familiar with all its elements.

One can say with assurance that Petipa and his works have not yet been properly evaluated. People remark on the absence of Petipa’s ballets from the repertoire of our theatres, and then jump to conclusions about the obsolescence of his creative genius.

Asserting this they forget about one specific trait of ballet, the two-hundred-year-old tradition of legalized plagiarism. Every reviver of a ballet who merely “touches up” or re-edits details, considers himself the author of the ballet. To catch him in the act is at times difficult: choreography has no records—creations of the past are not preserved for us in pages of music or in special books.

Many ballets, fragments and numbers by Petipa exist on our stages under the names of new choreographers. We also see his choreographic motifs, his plastic images in the work of his descendents.

Therefore, when we are told that this or that choreographer has successfully staged “Swan Lake,” “The Sleeping Beauty,” “Raymonda,” etc., we know that this was

based on Petipa's material and not on empty ground. Until we understand that, until we include Petipa in the group of the greatest artists of the 19th century composers, poets, painters, etc., we shall not, in essence, find the proper evaluation of this master and his legacy in our days.

* * *

And Petipa? What happened to him dur-



Marius Petipa. Caricature by Nicholas Legat

ing the seven years which separate the ill-fated date of his last première and the day of his death in 1910?

Forgotten by everybody, the retired soloist of His Majesty, the former sovereign of the Russian ballet could not believe for a long time that his work was finished. Scraps of paper in the archives contain various sentences implying the same meaning, which acquires the character of a tiresome refrain: "I could still offer many good ideas and advice." Petipa, the "gatherer" of classic choreography, who for more than half a century bustled about the affairs of the Russian ballet, pined from an overabundance of strength in enforced idleness. In his seclusion he drew sketches of "future productions," was not too lazy to re-write clean copies of new libretti, and even made up lists of necessary props, still imagining that perhaps tomorrow morning the bell would ring and a functionary of His Majesty's ministry of the court would invite him to return to the theatre.

* * *

The autocratic world of pomp and ceremony, of Imperial Theatres and court favorites, was tottering amid the noise and confusion of the Russo-Japanese war and the first waves of that folk anger which finally swept the Russian empire out of existence.

Petipa did not see it and had no misgivings about it. He was preparing a new ballet, for which he created *mise-en-scène*, made sketches of costumes—and waited for a miracle. This was the real death of the great theatrical master, a death as final as the ultimate grave.

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NOTES ON SOURCE MATERIAL

1. See reviews about Petipa in the articles of A. Benois in the newspaper *Rech* for 1910, in theatrical monographs (specifically, *The Book of The New Theatre*, St. Petersburg, 1908), in articles by Michel Fokine (*Argus*, for 1916, No. 1), and other articles about the ballet in the years 1907-1917.
2. The activities of Marius Petipa prior to his arrival in Russia were described in M. Petipa's *Memoires*, (St. Petersburg, 1906) the pamphlets of D. Leshkoff (*Marius Petipa*, 1922) and the Ivanovs (Petrograd, 1922).
3. Memoires of the artist T. Stoukolkin, *The Artist*, No. 45 and 46, 1895.
4. Volynsky, A., *The Book of Exultation*, Leningrad, 1925, page 194.
5. The A. A. Bakhrouchin State Central Theatrical Museum, Archives of M. Petipa, folder **Correspondence**.
6. *Russkaya Stzena*, No. 2, 1864, p. 61.
7. *Russkaya Stzena*, No. 2, 1865, p. 222.
8. N. Nekrasoff's poem *The Ballet* was written under the impressions gained from the Ballets *The Daughter of Pharaoh*, *The Humpbacked Horse* and the dance *The Little Moujik*.
9. *Russkaya Stzena*, No. 2, 1865, p. 222.
10. Leshkoff, D., (op. cit. pp. 18-19). An official biographer of Petipa, the balletomane N. Besobrasoff, attributed the intention to transfer Petipa to the special value of his talent. But later he wrote: "As a candidate for ballet master in St. Petersburg A. Bogdanoff was nominated." (*Annals of the Imperial Theatres* for 1896-1897, p. 29) Since Bogdanoff was without any talent, the idea of his appointment as ballet-master could have come only in connection with Petipa's failures.
11. Waltz, K., *65 Years in the Theatre*, Academia, Leningrad, 1928, p. 70.
12. Khoudkoff, S., *History of Dance*, vol. IV, 1917, p. 88 (apparently she had a partner,—Y.S.).
13. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
14. Leshkoff, D., op. cit., p. 21.
15. Khoudkoff, S., *Reminiscences about the first performance of the Hunchbacked Horse*, *Peterburgskaya Gasetta*, No. 20, 1896.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Sokoloff, P., *Memoires*, Gaimk, 1930, p. 123.
18. *Theatrical Almanac for 1875*, compiled by A. Sokoloff.
19. *Souffleur*, No. 11, 1881.
20. The second scene of the ballet (on the square) was staged in the current edition by A. Gorsky who utilized several moments of the original production by Petipa.
21. "The very theme is thankless and there is little place in it for fantasy," noted a critic of the premiere of *Don Quixote* in *Vsemirnaya Illustratsia*, No. 161, 1872, p. 78.
22. Khoudkoff, S., *History of Dance*, vol. IV, p. 103.
23. Archives of Petipa, folder **Notes**.
24. Bournonville, A., see *Klassiki Khoreografii*, chapter IV, Leningrad, 1937, p. 236.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Skalkovsky, K., *Ballet*, St. Petersburg, 1886, p. 267.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
28. Archives of Petipa, folder **Mlada**.
29. *Russkaya Stzena*, No. 1, 1865, p. 99.
30. Bajenoff, A., *Collected Works and Translations*, Moscow, 1869, pp. 215 and 231.
31. Stoukolkin, op. cit., p. 126.
32. *Souffleur*, No. 22, 1879.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Bournonville, A., op. cit., (Mit Theater Liv.) The Russian audience of the 80's—90's objected to the romantic treatment even of fantastic themes (see the remarks of K. Skalkovsky, A. Pleshcheeff in connection with the revival of *La Sylphide* in 1892-1893).
35. *Panteon I Repertuar Russkoy Stzeny*, vol. III, book 5, 1850, p. 4.
36. Slonimsky, Y., Blasis, *Klassiki Khoreografii*, chapter 2.
37. *Teatralny Mirok*, No. 25 (40), 1886.
38. *Ibid.*, No. 16, 1886.
39. We took the notes referring to several dancers from the book *V Teatralnom Meere* by K. Skalkovsky. Some technological ideas about the Italian school of dance may be gained from A. Volynsky's *The Book of Exultation* (Leningrad, 1925) and A. Vaganova's *The Fundamentals of the Classic Dance* (Leningrad, 1934).
40. Facts about the lack of culture among the directors are mentioned by K. Skalkovsky in his quoted books and in the pamphlet by S. Taneeff, *From the Past of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres*, St. Petersburg, 1886.
41. Archives of Petipa, folder **Correspondence**, see letter of Sept. 17, 1885.
42. *Ibid.*, folder **Vestal**.
43. *Ibid.*, see folder corresponding to the titles of the ballets.
44. Khoudkoff, S., *History of Dance*, vol. IV, p. 156.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
46. Archives of Petipa, folder **Correspondence**.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Pleshcheeff, A., *Nash Ballet*, St. Petersburg, 1899.
49. Archives of Petipa, folder **Correspondence**. This contradicts Besobrasoff, who asserted that Petipa was "The Heir of Perrot"! (*Annals of the Imperial*

51. Volynsky, A., op. cit., p. 218.
52. Ibid., p. 219.
53. Shiriaeff, A. V., **Memoires**, manuscript.
54. Volynsky, A., op. cit., p. 167.
55. Stoukolkin, op. cit., p. 126.
56. Telyakovsky, V., **Balletomany**, in **Arena**, Vremia, Leningrad, 1924, p. 67.
57. Ibid., p. 68.
58. Ibid., p. 69.
59. **Birjevy Vydmosti**, No. 81, 1903, dept. **Khronika**.
60. Pre-revolutionary opinions continued to circulate for some time in pamphlets about Petipa by D. Leshkoff (1922), K. K. and I. N. Ivanov (1922) and M. Yakovleff (1927).
61. In all fairness it must be said that in 1919 the ballet-master B. Romanoff published an article in which he spoke about the value of Petipa's method of work with a respect unusual for his contemporaries (see **Biriuch**, No. 7, 1919, p. 35).
62. Waltz, K., **65 Years in the Theatre**, Academia, Leningrad, 1927, p. 108.
63. Archives of Petipa, folder **Raymonda**.
64. Ibid.
65. Letter from Troubetzkoy to Petipa from Oct. 6-8, 1883. (From the materials of L. D. Blok.)
66. Letter from Troubetzkoy to Petipa, end of October, 1883. (From the materials of L. D. Blok.)
67. Archives of Petipa, folder **Raymonda**.
68. Ibid., folder **Correspondence**. Letter to S. Khoudkoff of March 10, 1898.
69. Telyakovsky, V., **Balletomany**, op. cit., p. 60.
70. Volynsky, A., op. cit., p. 197.
71. Shiriaeff, A. op. cit.

MISCELLANEOUS

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LIST OF BALLETS PRODUCED BY MARIUS PETIPA

This list is based on the summary by D. Leshkoff in his book **Marius Petipa** (Petrograd, 1922), in which essential corrections have been made.

INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS

- | | | |
|--|--------|---------------------------------|
| 1. THE STAR OF GRENADA (Divertissement) | 1 Act | Unknown composer — Jan. 9, 1855 |
| 2. A MARRIAGE DURING THE REGENCY | 1 Act | Pugni — Dec. 18, 1858 |
| 3. THE PARISIAN MARKET | 1 Act | " — Apr. 23, 1859 |
| 4. THE BLUE DAHLIA | 2 Acts | " — Apr. 30, 1860 |
| 5. TERPSICHORE | 1 Act | " — Sept. 15, 1861 |
| 6. THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH | 4 Acts | " — Jan. 18, 1862 |
| 7. THE BEAUTY OF LIBANUS | 3 Acts | " — Dec. 12, 1863 |
| 8. THE TRAVELLING DANCER | 1 Act | " — Sept. 4, 1865 |
| (The plot and some of the dances were borrowed from a ballet by Philippe Taglioni) | | |
| 9. FLORIDA | 3 Acts | " — Jan. 20, 1866 |
| 10. THE BENEVOLENT CUPID | 1 Act | " — Mar. 6, 1868 |
| 11. THE SLAVE (Divertissement) | 1 Act | " — Apr. 27, 1868 |
| 12. KING CANDAULE | 4 Acts | " — Oct. 17, 1868 |
| 13. DON QUIXOTE | 4 Acts | Minkus — Moscow — Dec. 14, 1869 |
| | | St. Petersburg — Sept. 19, 1871 |
| 14. TRILBY | 3 Acts | Gerber — Moscow — Jan. 20, 1870 |
| | | St. Petersburg — Jan. 17, 1871 |
| 15. TWO STARS | 1 Act | Pugni — Jan. 31, 1871 |

16. CAMARGO	3 Acts	Minkus — Dec. 17, 1872
17. THE BUTTERFLY	4 Acts	" — Jan. 6, 1874
18. THE BANDITS	4 Acts	" — Jan. 26, 1875
19. THE ADVENTURES OF PELEUS (Thetis and Peleus)	3 Acts	" — Jan. 18, 1876
20. A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM	1 Act	added numbers by Delibes Mendelssohn — Minkus — July 14, 1876
21. LA BAYADERE	4 Acts	" — Jan. 23, 1876
22. ROXANA, THE BEAUTY OF MONTENEGRO	4 Acts	" — Jan. 29, 1877
23. THE DAUGHTER OF THE SNOWS	3 Acts	" — Jan. 7, 1879
24. FRIZAK, THE BARBER	1 Act	" — Mar. 11, 1879
25. MLADA	4 Acts	" — Dec. 2, 1879
26. ZORAIYA, or THE MOORISH GIRL FROM SPAIN	4 Acts	" — Feb. 1, 1881
27. NIGHT AND DAY	1 Act	Minkus — Moscow — May 18, 1883
28. PYGMALION, or THE CYPRESS STATUE	4 Acts	Prince Troubetzkoy — Dec. 11, 1883
29. THE MAGIC PILLS (Fairy-Spectacle)	3 Acts	Minkus — Feb. 9, 1886
30. THE KING'S COMMAND	4 Acts	Vicentini — Feb. 14, 1886
31. SACRIFICES TO CUPID	1 Act	Minkus — Peterhof — July 29, 1886
32. THE VESTAL	3 Acts	M. Ivanov — Feb. 7, 1888
33. THE TALISMAN	4 Acts	Drigo — Jan. 25, 1889
34. CAPRICES OF THE BUTTERFLY	1 Act	Krotkoff — July 5, 1889
35. THE SLEEPING BEAUTY	3 Acts	Tchaikowsky — Jan. 3, 1890
36. NENUFAR	1 Act	Krotkoff — Nov. 11, 1891
37. KALKABRINO	3 Acts	Minkus — Feb. 13, 1891
38. HALT OF THE CAVALRY	1 Act	Armsheimer — Jan. 21, 1896
39. THE PEARL	1 Act	Drigo — Moscow — May 17, 1896 St. Petersburg — Feb. 23, 1900
40. BLUEBEARD	3 Acts	Schenk — Dec. 8, 1896
41. RAYMONDA	3 Acts	Glazounov — Jan. 7, 1898
42. THE TRIAL OF DAMIS or THE PRANKS OF LOVE	1 Act	Glazounov — Hermitage — Jan. 17, 1900 Maryinsky — Feb. 13, 1900
43. THE SEASONS	1 Act	Glazounov — Hermitage — Feb. 7, 1900 Maryinsky — Feb. 13, 1900
44. HARLEQUINADE	2 Acts	Drigo — Hermitage — Feb. 10, 1900 Maryinsky — Feb. 13, 1900
45. THE PUPILS OF DUPRE (A shortened version of The King's Command)	2 Acts	Vicentini — Feb. 17, 1900
46. THE MAGIC MIRROR	4 Acts	Korshchenko — Feb. 9, 1903

Revisions of Ballets by Other Choreographers and Joint Productions

1. PAQUITA	3 Acts	Score: Deldevez and Minkus: Sept. 26, 1947 choreography: Mazilier. (in 1881 Petipa added dance numbers)
2. SATANELLA, or LOVE AND HELL	3 Acts	Score: Reber and Benoîs: Feb. 10, 1848 choreography: Philippe Taglioni.

3. LEDA, or THE SWISS MILKMAID	1 Act	Score: Pugni; choreography: Titus. (Considerable changes from the original production.)	Feb. 8, 1849
4. GISELLE	2 Acts	Score: A. Adam; choreography: Coralli and Jules Perrot. (Revision of dances, a new pas de deux in Act I.)	Oct. 8, 1860
5. FAUST	3 Acts	Score: C. Pugni and Paniz; choreography: Jules Perrot. (Revision of dance episodes.)	Oct. 2, 1867
6. CORSAIRE	3 Acts	Score: A. Adam and C. Pugni; choreography: Jules Perrot. (Revision and addition of new dance numbers.)	Jan. 25, 1868
7. LA FILLE DU DANUBE	2 Acts	Score: A. Adam; choreography: Philippe Taglioni. (Revision of dances.)	Feb. 24, 1880
8. COPPELIA	3 Acts	Score: Leo Delibes; choreography: Saint-Léon. (Revision of dances.)	Dec. 25, 1884
9. THE WILFUL WIFE	3 Acts	Score: A. Adam and C. Pugni; choreography: Mazilier and Jules Perrot. (General revision and addition of new numbers.)	Jan. 20, 1885
10. ESMERALDA	3 Acts	Score: C. Pugni; Choreography: Jules Perrot. (General revision, changes and additions.)	1886
11. THE HAARLEM TULIP	2 Acts	Score: Fitinghoff-Schell; choreography: Lev Ivanov. (General artistic supervision. The extent of Petipa's participation has not been fully established.)	Oct. 4, 1887
12. FIAMMETTA	4 Acts	Score: L. Minkus; choreography: Saint-Léon (Revision of production and new dance numbers.)	Dec. 6, 1887
13. LA SYLPHIDE	2 Acts	Score: Jean Schneitzhoeffter; separate numbers by Richard Drigo; choreography: Philippe Taglioni. (New numbers and general revision.)	Jan. 10, 1892
14. THE NAIADE AND THE FISHERMAN	3 Acts	Score: C. Pugni; choreography: Jules Perrot. (Many new numbers and general revision.)	Sept. 20, 1892
15. THE AWAKENING OF FLORA	1 Act	Score: Richard Drigo; choreography: Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa.	July 28, 1893
16. SWAN LAKE	3 Acts	Score: P. Tchaikowsky; choreography: Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa. (Scene 1 Act 1 and Act 2, except two numbers.)	Jan. 15, 1895
17. THE HUMPBACKED HORSE	4 Acts	Score: C. Pugni; choreography: Saint-Léon. (General revision; new choreography of many numbers.)	July 6, 1895